



MONTALBERT.

A NOVEL.

BY CHARLOTTE SMITH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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MONTALBERT.

CHAPTER XIII.

ROSALIE now saw the beloved parent, whom she yet dared not own, every day; and the discovery of her marriage with Montalbert, which she had so much dreaded, had been the means of procuring her the knowledge of the blessing she possessed in a mother, who now secretly indulged all the tenderness of her heart. The eldest Miss Vyvian, now Mrs. Bosworth, was still at the family seat of her husband with her sister, and her father

was gone into the north during the recess of parliament ; no impediment, therefore, existed at present against Rosalie's passing almost all her time with Mrs. Vyvian, and so happy did this indulgence make her, that, had Montalbert been in England, she would hardly have had a wish left ungratified.

It was now indeed that such a friend was more necessary to her than ever, and it was more requisite that this dear friend should know she was a wife, since she found it was probable she should become a mother. Nothing was more immediately pressing than that Montalbert should be informed of this ; but without the concurrence of Mrs. Vyvian, and indeed without her assistance, she dared not hazard a letter, which, if it fell into the hands of his mother, might be of the most fatal consequence. The two letters she had received from Montalbert were but too expressive of his despondence and uneasiness ; and though he seemed to stifle part of the anguish of his heart from tenderness

tenderneſs towards his wife, ſhe ſaw that the reception his mother had given him was far from having been pleaſant, and that, while he yet acknowledged the neceſſity of his journey, he regretted that he had made it.

But Mrs. Vyvian, who had received letters from her ſon, knew yet more : ſhe had learned that one reaſon for the impatience, expreſſed by the mother of Montalbert for his return to Naples, was, that ſhe had projected a marriage for him with the daughter of a friend of her own, who had lately loſt her huſband, a Roman of high rank, and was now a very rich widow. Charles Vyvian related all the advantages offered by ſuch an alliance : on the beauty of the young widow, and her predilection in favour of Montalbert, with whom ſhe had been acquainted before her firſt marriage, he dwelt particularly ; but added, laughingly, that he ſuppoſed Harry had left his heart in England, for at preſent he ſeemed as inſenſible to the charms

of the lady, as deaf to the remonstrances of his mother.

Mrs. Vyvian was extremely distressed by this intelligence, which she carefully avoided communicated. Though she loved Montalbert extremely, she had many doubts whether in affairs of love he had more honour than other gay young men. She had reason formerly to believe his principles were very free, and she could not but fear, that he might consider his marriage with Rosalie, celebrated as it had been contrary to the laws of England, as an engagement so little binding, that he might break it whenever ambition or the love of variety might induce him to it.

The situation, therefore, of this beloved child, more dear than ever to her, was a dreadful weight on the spirits of Mrs. Vyvian; and she now felt renewed, in the person of Rosalie, all those cruel sensations which had corroded her own heart, when, betrayed by an unhappy passion into great and dangerous imprudence, she was
compelled

compelled to undergo all the meanness of concealment, and all the terrors of detection. The similarity of their destinies hitherto endeared to her mother this lovely unfortunate young woman, who seemed too likely to be doubly a victim; yet, circumstanced as she was herself, she could not protect her openly, and even trembled every time she reflected that, with the return of the family of her husband, the indulgence of ever seeing Rosalie must be resigned; and that they must equally stifle their fears and their affections.

Every day rendered the situation of Rosalie more critical. Though Mrs. Lessington seemed, as if by a tacit agreement with Mrs. Vyvian, not to notice the preference Rosalie so evidently gave to the latter, and to suffer her to act as she pleased, others, who still supposed her a member of the Lessington family, could not be but surprised at her associating so little with them, nor help remarking, that whenever they did see her among them, there was something peculiar in

her manner and appearance. The men, who had admired her beauty, but who had been repulsed by her coldness, now discovered, as they always do on such occasions, that the poor girl was in love; and while the elder ladies thought her proud, conceited, and full of airs, some of the younger entirely agreed with them, while others, more candid or more sensible, pitied her on the supposition that she had an "unhappy attachment;" or, as the damsels of lower rank would have expressed it, "that she was crossed in love."

Mrs. Vyvian was too deeply interested to have a moment's tranquillity; and when the hour of Mrs. Bosworth's return approached, this anxiety became more and more insupportable: and it was certain that health so delicate could not long resist such painful solicitude.

After long deliberation and consulting with the Abbé Hayward, who had long been aware of who Rosalie really was, Mrs. Vyvian determined to write to Montalbert

talbert with the same precautions as those Rosalie used by his directions. This she executed, not without finding it the most difficult and painful task she had ever undertaken. To avow the dissimulation of her whole life to her nephew, to explain to him circumstances of which she knew he must be entirely ignorant, words were not easily found. At length, however, the letter was written and sent off, and she returned once more to her long and pensive conferences with the object of it, with whom also a task yet remained quite as distressing to her.

This was to tell Rosalie to whom she owed her birth ; to give a relation of circumstances which she knew must appear very strange to her. Mrs. Vyvian saw her often look as if she at once dreaded and expected this explanation ; but never yet had she acquired courage to begin the conversation, and Rosalie was too timid to make any inquiries that led to it.

But Mrs. Bosworth and Miss Vyvian would now return in a short time, and

then the mother and daughter must no longer indulge themselves with being together for whole days as they were now—a heavy presentment of future evil, to which the former was too apt to yield, told her, that if the present time was lost, future opportunities might be wanting.—The next morning, therefore, after having made her resolution, she put it into execution.

Rosalie, whom she had desired to come early, was seated at work by her bed-side, for she was too much indisposed to leave it; when Mrs. Vyvian, opening a little casket which she had previously placed near her pillow, put into the hands of Rosalie a miniature picture, and, in a trembling voice, said, “ It is the likeness of—your father ! ”——It represented a man of two or three and twenty : the countenance expressed understanding and vivacity of sentiment, and the whole figure was remarkably handsome. Rosalie gazed on it in silence, and with sensations that cannot be described. “ Do you see no resemblance,

blance,

blance, my Rosalie, (said Mrs. Vyvian), to a face you know?—Ah! do you not trace in these features the likeness you bear to-----?—Believe me, my child, (continued she, unable to restrain her tears), this morning is the first time for many years that I have allowed myself to look at that picture, and now I resign it for ever—take it, my dear girl, and may you not resemble him in fortune as in features.”

“ Does my father yet live, Madam ? ” Rosalie would have said, but she could not articulate the sentence : her mother, however, understood her. “ He does, (replied she), but not in England—I shall never see him more—nor am I guilty or wretched enough to wish it.—Never have these eyes beheld him since that fatal hour when I was compelled to give to another the hand which was his in the sight of God; but, though my hand was not at my own disposal, never has it acknowledged any sovereign but him to whom

my first vows were given : yet I very sincerely tried, when under the cruel necessity of giving myself to Mr. Vyvian, to fulfil the duties that were imposed upon me. He knew that I was compelled to marry him—he was indelicate and selfish enough to consider only the convenience of my fortune, and a person, which was then an object to a man, licentious and dissolute as he was: yet I *think* he never has had any just reason to complain of my conduct since I have borne the name of his wife. He knew I neither did nor ever could love him—for I told him so when I married him. He was contented to possess my fortune and my person—my heart he never thought worth the experiment that some men would have made to have gained it.” A deep sigh and a long pause, which Rosalie did not interrupt, now followed.—

In a few moments Mrs. Vyvian seemed to have regained her resolution, and thus proceeded—

“ You

“ You should have an idea of what sort of a man, my father, Mr. Montalbert, was, before you can imagine how I was situated. I do not believe you know more than his name ; for Mrs. Leffington was probably cautious of entering into any part of my unfortunate history.—Mr. Montalbert then, my father, was the elder brother of a family, which, from its name, was evidently of Norman extraction—a boast that is generally deemed a sufficient ground for the pride of ancestry in England. The Montalberts, however, could carry their genealogy much farther, and were content to begin it only among the Emperors of the East. As English Peers, they adhered to the unfortunate James the Second, were banished with him, and lost their property, their title, and their rights as British subjects. My father, being much connected with noble families more fortunate, had interest enough to obtain restitution of a small part indeed of the great fortunes of his family, but sufficient to give him once more a footing in Eng-
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land,

land, where he was happy enough to marry one of its richest heiresses. My mother, who was the only offspring of an alliance between two noble houses, inherited all their possessions, and gave them and herself to my father, in despite of the opposition of such of her family as pretended to any right of giving their opinion ; for her father and mother being dead, there were only uncles or cousins whose dissent could not prevent her following her own inclinations.

“ This great property was divided between me and my brother, the father of Montalbert, your husband, but not equally ; for he had of course the greatest share. The noble castle and the estates, belonging to it in the north, are the principal part of what remains to him in England ; for having early formed connections upon the continent, he never loved or lived long in England : his life was not long, for he died soon after the birth of your husband ; so soon, indeed, that he had neglected to make for him the provision he ought to have

have

have made, and, by a prior will, Harry Montalbert was left almost entirely dependent on his mother.

“ In consequence of the long absences, and afterwards of the early death of my brother, I came to be considered by my father as an only child. Dissatisfied with a world, which he had, from personal infirmities, no longer the power of enjoying, he retired to Holmwood when I was about fifteen, and, from that time, you may imagine my life was very reclusive, for then the country around it was less inhabited, and the roads less passable than they are now.

“ Harsh as my father was, I loved him very tenderly, and therefore did not murmur at the confinement thus imposed upon me at a time of life when other young women enter the world and enjoy its pleasures: nor did the fatigues of constant attendance in a sick chamber, and continuing to read sometimes for half the night, for a moment deter me from doing
my

my duty, or for a moment induce me to repine.

“ I have since thought, Rosalie, that this period, with all its little hardships and inconveniences, was the happiest of my life.—My friend Mrs. Lessington, though then married, and some years older than me, was still often my companion, and shared a task which without her I could not have executed so well. Whenever I was released from the chamber of my suffering parent, I saw around me scenes of nature, which seemed to put on new beauties as if to reward me for my perseverance in painful duties; and if I tasted not of pleasures which are accounted happiness by very young women, I was at least content. Thus, without much variation, passed more than three years of my life.

“ My father had a relation in Ireland, whose ancestors having suffered in the same cause as that in which the Montalberts had lost their property, had not been so fortunate

fortunate in re-establishing their affairs; but their descendant was, with a numerous family, obliged to live on a very small estate, and in great obscurity in the north of Ireland.

“ One of the sons, however, having been sent young to the East Indies, had done so well, that he wrote to have *two* of his three brothers follow him, informing his father, that though he could not make remittances for the purpose of fitting them out, he was sure when they arrived there of getting them into situations nearly as advantageous as his own.

“ In consequence of this, their father sent his third and fourth sons to England, to solicit among their friends and their relations the means of equipping them in such a way as might enable them to avail themselves of these advantageous prospects. The eldest of the two soon found sufficient assistance in London, and departed; but the younger having been
seized

seized with a violent fit of illness in London, was under the necessity of seeing the last ship of the season sail without him, and at the invitation of my father, who had taken most of the expence of his equipment upon himself, he came down to Holmwood to recover his health, while he waited for an opportunity of following his brother, which was not likely to offer for some months.

“Ormsby was about one and twenty when he was thus received into the house of my father, who soon learned to consider him as a son; becoming so attached to him, that he was not easy in his absence.

“Even at this distance of time, I reflect with wonder on the carelessness with which my father suffered two very young people to be continually together, without appearing to think of the probability there was that they might form an attachment to each other. It is true that I have
myself

myself discovered inattention of the same sort in regard to you and Montalbert; but besides the prepossession of your predilection in favour of Vyvian, with which my mind was distracted, the character of Montalbert was so different from that of Ormsby, that it never occurred to me that there was equal hazard in your being continually in his company."——

Mrs. Vyvian now seemed to be so much fatigued, and to be so little able to continue a narrative so affecting to her spirits, that Rosalie entreated her to forbear concluding it till she was less likely to suffer by dwelling on scenes which it gave her so much pain to recal; but the probability that their long and private conferences might be less frequent when they were continually liable to be broken in upon by Mrs. Bosworth and her sister, and the necessity there was that Rosalie should know the circumstances of her birth, and what were Mrs. Vyvian's wishes as to

her future conduct, determined her, to exert herself to the utmost of her power, to conclude all she had to relate—the singular circumstances of her former life.

CHAP. XIV.

IN the evening Mrs. Vyvian found herself able to proceed, and thus continued her narrative:——

“ My friend Mrs. Lessington, who had now a family of children, was no longer at liberty to give me so much of her time as she had hitherto done ; but, at this period, the living of Mayfield, which was in my father’s gift, becoming vacant, I was fortunate enough to procure it for her husband, and had the comfort of seeing her settled within four miles of Holmwood.

“ Greatly, indeed, had I need of the prudence and steadiness of a friend. Imagine, my Rosalie, how I was at this time situated. Ormsby, though he lived so much with me, was yet so sensible of
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the distance fortune had placed between us, that for many months after he became an inmate in our house he never breathed the most distant expression of his affection; yet, young as I was, I could not mistake the meaning of his looks, and those silent attentions he incessantly paid me. He *seemed*—ah! he *was*—too artless to disguise entirely his sentiments; but the ineffectual struggle he made to do so was a spectacle infinitely more dangerous for me than the warmest professions could have been: he had even the generosity to avoid me for some time, and, as if by tacit consent, we met only in my father's room, where he now almost always supplied my place, and sat whole days, and often whole nights, with a tenderness and patience that, in my opinion, overpaid the debt of gratitude which he owed him. But sometimes, when my father's old servant was able to give that attendance for which he was often disqualified by illness, Ormsby was unexpectedly released; and it was at one of these periods that the explanation was
brought

brought on, which afterwards cost me so dear.

“ My father had been extremely ill for many days. It was spring, a season that always brought on the most painful paroxysms of the gout: his old servant, hardly less a victim to this disease than himself, had been laid up, and Ormsby had been my father’s attendant for ten days, almost without taking off his clothes, and certainly without having had any interval of rest.

“ Barford, my father’s servant, having a little recovered, came down to his relief, for no other person was suffered to enter the room but Ormsby, myself, and this man.

“ As at this time Ormsby was so much fatigued, that he could hardly support himself, he hastened to procure what refreshment a change of clothes afforded, and then to relieve a violent head-ache, the effect of want of sleep, he wandered into the garden for the air.

You

You remember, Rosalie, the temple at the end of the avenue of stone pines—thither I have often went with my work, or with a book, when I was alone; behind it is, you recollect, a copse, which at the season of the year now present, for it was the middle of May, echoed with the music of innumerable birds. Every object breathed of peace and beauty; and as *my* heart had long since learned to associate the idea of Ormsby with every scene that gave me pleasure, I was meditating on future possibilities of happiness, when the object of my dangerous contemplations suddenly appeared coming towards the place where I sat.

“To the lively interest he always inspired was now added, that which arose from the fatigue he had evidently undergone. He was pale and his eyes were heavy for want of rest. I saw him with a slow and languid step ascend the little turf hill on which the temple is situated: I could not have escaped from it without
his

his seeing me, if I had wished to have done so ; but, in truth, I had no desire to fly from him ; and though I trembled as he approached me, it was with a sort of delightful apprehension, for I fancied he would now speak to me, if not in direct terms—yet in such as would leave me no longer in doubt as to his real sentiments : yet while I wished this, I dreaded it ; and when he entered the place where I sat, I know not which of us appeared the most confused. He had long studiously avoided me, and certainly did not now expect to meet me ; but as he knew I had seen him, and perhaps had not resolution enough to deny himself the unexpected opportunity of speaking to me, he came into that wing of the temple, and, after the common salutation of the morning, sat down near me.

“ I inquired after my father, though it was not an hour since I had been in the room ; but it gave me occasion to say, though in a faltering voice, how much I was obliged to Ormsby for his constant attendance.

tendance. I had not concluded the sentence, when he said, ‘ Obligations, Miss Montalbert !—surely all obligations are mine ; but were it otherwise, were not your father my best friend—that he *is your* father would be enough to induce me to make any sacrifices : there is happiness in being able to serve him as my benefactor ; but there is something more than happiness in thinking that, in attending on the respectable parent of Miss Montalbert, I save her from one hour’s fatigue, or mitigate to her one hour of anxiety.’

“ I will not relate the sequel of our conversation before it ended : Ormsby, while he accused himself at once of presumption and ingratitude, professed for me the most violent, though hopeless, passion. He saw too evidently, that if it depended on me it would not be hopeless : already my heart had said to me much more than Ormsby, even in making this declaration, dared to intimate. It had whispered that my father’s partiality for him might very probably conquer the objections that his
total

total want of fortune might raise. I had fancied that it was impossible my father could leave us so much together, unless he meant to give a tacit consent to an affection which was so likely to arise between two young persons. I had imagined, that, finding us both necessary to his comfort, he intended to unite us: my fortune must be such as, I supposed, made any consideration as to that of my lover entirely needless.—Alas! how little is the inexperienced mind of youth capable of judging of those motives that influence men in advanced life. Though my father was retired from the world, he had not lost in retirement the passions that influence the men of that world: on the contrary, living where he was the lord of many miles, where none, either in his house or around it, ever disputed his will, he had, like a despot, entirely forgotten that others had any will at all. Of a marriage of love he had no idea; nor did it ever occur to him, as a thing possible, that a dependent relation, who was indebted to

his bounty for a subsistence, could dare to lift his eyes to a daughter of the house of Montalbert, for whom, though he had never yet hinted at them, my father had very different views.

“ But love, too apt to listen to the voice of hope, suffered us not to see the misery we were laying up for ourselves; and even amidst the reproaches Ormsby often made himself, for what he termed treachery and ingratitude, the flattering illusions into which we were betrayed by youthful inexperience, not only quieted these alarms of conscience, but made us listen with something bordering on resentment to the remonstrances of my friend, Mrs. Lessington, who took every occasion of representing the danger of my indulging my predilection for Ormsby. I endeavoured to persuade her, as I had persuaded myself, that I should one day become his wife, with the permission of my father. Mrs. Lessington, who undoubtedly knew the world and my father's temper much better than I did, left nothing

thing unsaid that was likely to convince me of this dangerous error: she even threatened to inform my father of the truth, unless I endeavoured to conquer this fatal prepossession; and she assured me if she did, the consequence would be the immediate disgrace and dismissal of Ormsby. This menace, which I knew she would never execute, had an effect exactly opposite to that which she intended. The idea of Ormsby, driven from the house, suffering poverty and mortification, and abandoned by the world only for his attachment to me, endeared him to me infinitely more than he would have been, had I seen him surrounded with affluence and prosperity. Nothing is so dangerous as pity; and my friend, in attempting to save me, hastened my ruin by exciting it.

“ I cannot, Rosalie, trace the progress of this fatal passion. My confessor, who alone might have checked its progress, was surely careless of his charge, or was

possibly become indifferent to the welfare of a family he was soon on the point of quitting. He went to Rome exactly at the time when he might perhaps have saved me, and it was some time before he was replaced by Mr. Hayward.

“ During that interval, as Mrs. Lessington was gone into the west on a visit to her husband’s relations, Ormsby was more than ever alone with me. Every hour, indeed, in which the attendance of the one or the other was not necessary in my father’s room, we passed together. From an habit of indulging myself in the illusive hope that I might one day be his wife, I insensibly learned to consider myself already so in the sight of Heaven..... Ormsby was young and passionate : he was not an artful seducer ; but I had no mother, I had no friend, and those who candidly reflect on my situation will surely compassionate, though they may not perhaps acquit me.

“ How soon, alas ! was this deviation from rectitude and honour severely and bitterly

terly punished. Though my father had been wilfully blind or strangely negligent, the servants, and from them the neighbours, saw enough to make them suspect more. We had little or no communication with the gentlemen's families around us, divided from them as we were by the difference of religion, habits, and connections; but in ours, as in every other neighbourhood, there were officious and impertinent people, whose greatest pleasure was to inquire into the affairs of others, and disturb as much as was in their power the peace of families. The country town adjoining to Holmwood produced at that time, as indeed it has done since, but too many of this description. — I, who hardly knew that such persons existed, was, however, marked out for the victim of their malignity; and, as if the terrors that now incessantly beset me were insufficient, for I found myself likely to become a mother, one of these officious fiends completed; or rather accelerated, the evil destiny that hung over me.

“ While I waited with agonising impatience the return of Mrs. Lessington, whose counsel was so necessary in my present alarming situation, Ormsby, more wretched than I was, attempted to soothe and console me, and I was insensible of any other comfort than what I derived from weeping in his arms. Little dreaming of the storm that was ready to burst upon us, I sought him as usual one morning in the plantation, where we were accustomed, as it was yet early autumn, to meet in a morning before either the family were likely to interrupt us, and before my father demanded either his attendance or mine—I found him not ; supposing it earlier than I had believed, I traversed for some time the walks of the wood without uneasiness—but at length his absence surprised and then alarmed me. I returned slowly towards the house, more and more amazed that Ormsby did not appear—I met the under gardener, and, without any precise design, I asked him some trifling question—the man, instead of answering,

ing,

ing, looked at me with a countenance expressive of terror and surprise; then, without answering, hurried away; while I, dreading I knew not what, quickened my steps towards the house, and was met in the lawn that immediately surrounded it by my own maid, a young woman who had been lately sent to me from France by a friend, and who was already much attached to me. *Her* countenance startled me infinitely more than that of the man I had just passed—I hastily inquired what was the matter?—Helene attempted to utter a few words in French, but her voice failed her, and, seizing my hands, she looked at me with such an expression of terror and anguish, that the only idea it conveyed was the death of my father: before my incoherent and breathless inquiries, or her attempts to answer them succeeded, my father's old butler came out, and, though he seemed equally terrified, he had just command enough of himself to tell me that I must immediately

attend his master; without having any distinct notion of the cause for which I was thus unexpectedly summoned, I obeyed in such confusion of mind that I know not how I reached the room.

“ My father was not as usual at so early an hour in his bed, but sitting in a chair—I saw that something had greatly disturbed him, and my guilty conscience whispered me that our fatal secret was discovered.... Trembling, so that I could not move across the room without the assistance of Helene, I at length approached the place. My father’s eyes were sternly fixed on my face; his lips quivered, and his voice faltered, while he reached his hand towards me, and gave me a letter he held in it.

‘ Read that — (said he sternly) — read it—and hear me for the first and the last time I shall ever speak again on so hateful a subject. *If* I thought you capable of any part of the folly, the infamy, which this letter attaches to your conduct, I
would

would not hold even this parley with you—but I *will* not think it; though I feverely arraign myself for my inattention, yet I know that a daughter of mine would not dare to encourage any man without my approbation; still less, is it possible that Rosalie Montalbert should think of a boy, who, though distantly my relation, and therefore a gentleman, is a beggar. . . . He is gone—you will see him no more.’

“ I heard, indeed, no more—for my senses forsook me, and I escaped from the rage and reproaches of my father; nor was I awakened from this trance till I found myself on my bed, with Helene weeping by me.—‘ What has happened to me, Helene?’ said I; for at that moment my recollection was confused, and, though I had the impression of something very dreadful on my mind, I remembered no more than that some dreadful evil had befallen Ormsby. Helene could only answer by tears and sobs——I raised myself in my bed—‘ Tell me, (said I), my dear

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friend,

friend, what did my father mean?—what is become of Ormsby?’

‘ Ah! dear young lady, (replied Helene), what would become of you, what would become of us all, if our master knew the truth, which now he will not allow himself only to suspect.—Oh! he is so passionate, he is so terrible, when he is angry, that I believe, upon my honour, he would destroy us all.’

‘ I wish he would destroy *me*, Helene, (said I, sighing deeply); but, unless you now intend to suffer me to die before you, tell me, I conjure you to tell me, what my father meant by saying that I should never see Ormsby more?’

‘ Indeed, (replied Helene), my dear mistress, I know no more of it than you do. In this great house you know that what is done at one end of it may very easily be unknown at the other. . . . I am as ignorant as you are now—but Mr. Ormsby is gone, or —————’

“ She stopped and hesitated.—‘ They have killed him, (exclaimed I)—I know they

they have destroyed him—do not deceive me—I will not be deceived—but let not my father, my inhuman father, imagine that I will survive—no, I will instantly go, I will avow the truth, and follow my husband to the grave.’——The frenzy that possessed me gave me strength: I sprang from the bed, and, in a state of desperation, was rushing towards my father’s room, when Helene, terrified at my attempt, threw herself before me, and shutting the door, locked it, and secured the key. This presence of mind alone saved me from the destruction on which I was throwing myself; for I believe, that had I at that moment appeared before my father, acknowledged my situation and my attachment to Ormsby, that he would, without hesitation, have stabbed me to the heart.

“ Such was the distracted state of my mind, that it was only when my strength was entirely exhausted that Helene could prevail upon me to listen to her arguments. At length I sunk into silent de-

spair, because I had no longer the power of speaking, and then Helene ventured to leave me, carefully locking the door of my chamber after her, as well as that of the anti-room, and hasten away to procure not only some medicine for me, which she hoped would quiet my agitated spirits, but the benefit of the counsel she knew she should receive from the Abbé Hayward, who, though he had not been more than a week in the house, had gained the confidence and good opinion of every one in the family.

“ When she was gone, I endeavoured to recal to my mind the words, the looks, and gestures of my father I shuddered as they passed in my memory, and I dared not think steadily upon the scene I had passed. Even now, Rosalie—even at the distance of almost nineteen years, I find that I cannot dwell upon it without horror.”

It was true the recollection affected Mrs. Vyvian so much, that a cold trembling seized her. Her voice failed, and
Rosalie,

Rosalie, terrified at the situation in which she saw her mother, entreated her to forbear any farther exertion till she was more able to undertake it. It was more than an hour before she was sufficiently recovered for Rosalie to leave her; at length, finding Mrs. Vyvian more composed, she retired to the house she used to call her home, having settled to be again at her mother's bedside at a very early hour the following morning.

CHAP. XV.

ONCE more seated by the bedside of her mother, who, on this morning, was too much indisposed to be able to leave it, Rosalie listened in silence to the continuation of a narrative in which she was so deeply interested.

“ While Helene was gone, (said Mrs. Vyvian), I collected strength enough to rise and go to the window of my bed-chamber. It was now night, but there was light enough to enable me to discern every object on the lawn round the house. I gazed, however, without knowing why, or on what:—the thought of Ormsby gone—lost to me for ever—perhaps destroyed—filled me with such undescribable horror, that my power of reflection
seemed

seemed to be annihilated. Impressed with that one idea, my heart seemed petrified; the certainty of instant death would have been received as a matter of indifference. All that I wished was, to be assured of the fate of Ormsby—I thought that if I knew what was become of him, I could brave the severest anger of my father, and die content, since I believed my death inevitable. How dismal every object that I surveyed from my window appeared!—not a human being appeared round the house: the woods that you may recollect terminate the lawn on one side were almost half stripped of their leaves; but they looked black, dreary, and fit for deeds of horror.—Yet do not, my dear Rosalie, believe, that however cruel I at that moment thought my father, I could suppose him capable of so dreadful a crime as that of directing the death of Ormsby; but I figured to myself, that, rendered desperate by the force that had been used to tear him away, he had resisted, and sunk
under

under the numbers of unfeeling men who were ready at every hazard to obey my father's orders—no otherwise could I account, in the present confused state of my mind, for his having disappeared without sending me one line—one last adieu!—or having made any attempt to give me notice of the scene that awaited me, or to arm me with the courage it required to pass through it.

“ I cannot discriminate the various emotions that agitated my mind during the absence of Helene, who, on her return in about an hour, found me still sitting at the window, as if I expected to see Ormsby pass, as he sometimes used to do under it of an evening, when he used to tell me he had peculiar delight in watching the light in my room, and seeing me pass across it, long before he dared tell me he loved me.

“ But now, alas! he was to appear there no more—and when Helene returned and came into my apartment, carefully locking
ing

ing the door after her, the expression of fear and dismay which her countenance wore renewed all my terrors. I flew towards her, and, though unable to speak, she saw that I anticipated the worst news she could relate to me.

“ She tried to command herself, that she might prevail upon me to be tranquil enough to attend to my own safety. It was, however, some time before I was in a condition to listen to her.

“ Helene at length related to me that the house was now apparently quiet, but that an air of amazement and consternation was perceivable on the faces of all its inhabitants; all of whom seemed afraid to speak or even to look at each other.— The Abbé Hayward, she said, had been alone with my father the whole day, and none of the servants had been permitted to wait but the old butler; that, on her applying to him for intelligence, he said he had orders to tell her, when she came down from her young lady, that Mr. Montalbert ordered her attendance.

‘ Ah,

‘ Ah, Madam, (said Helene in French), how I trembled when I heard this. I went, however, and my master ordering me to approach the place where he sat, said—Helene, it is my express orders, as well to you as to every other servant in my house, that no gossiping, no conversation, not even a word, shall be uttered as to any circumstance that has happened, or that you may suppose has happened in this family. The slightest failure in this respect will be attended with ill consequences—the least of which will be the loss of your place. I ask you no questions as to your *past* discretion——As to your lady, tell her from me that I expect she will to-morrow appear before me as my daughter ought to appear; on which condition only, the folly, or the affectation of this day, for I know not which to call it, shall be forgotten. You will tell her, as I have already caused it to be intimated to my people, that from *this hour* the name of Ormsby is never to be mentioned within these walls——go—
and

and remember what I say to you——
 Your father, Madam, (continued Helene),
 looked more stern than ever, as he said
 this; and indeed I trembled so, that I
 thought I must have fallen down as you
 did. That dear good man, the Abbé
 Hayward, looked at me as if he wished,
 but dared not, say any thing to comfort
 me. I got out of the room as well as
 I could, and went, looking I believe more
 white than a ghost, into the servants' hall,
 where I saw no person but the coachman
 and the gardener; neither of them spoke
 to me—they seem even afraid of speaking to
 each other. I passed into the housekeeper's
 room, under pretence of asking for some-
 thing for you: Mrs. Nelson was there,
 with the two house-maids and the laun-
 dry-maid; but instead of asking me any
 questions about you, as Mrs. Nelson al-
 most always does if you are at any time
 the least ill, she never inquired after you,
 though she knew you had been confined
 to your room ill the whole day; as to the
 maids,

maids, they seemed like statues, and while I staid on one pretence or other, in hopes of gaining some intelligence, Mrs. Nelson would have sent one of them to the store-room, but she turned as pale as death, and said it was impossible to go unless one of the other maids went with her. Mrs. Nelson gave her a strange look, but said nothing, and they went away together.'

" All this, so strangely obscure and unaccountable, redoubled my inquietude.—Something very unusual then had happened in the house, which had impressed terror on the minds of its inhabitants—What could this be but some violence that had been offered to Ormsby, which was known to all the servants, but which none of them dared to speak of?—There were few events, the certainty of which could be so dreadful as the state of horrible suspense I was now in. I think that my intellects, unable to sustain, sunk under it, and that the artificial calm that followed was the effect of the agonies in
which

which I passed this melancholy day, and the night that followed it.

“ Still placed in the window, with my eyes fixed on the lawn and woods that surrounded it, I heard the incoherent narrative of Helene, and continued to torment myself with every terrific idea that my sickening brain could raise.... Hideous shadows seemed to flit before me—I almost imagined that, in the murmurs of the wind, I heard the dying groans of Ormsby—that I heard him call upon me, and bid me adieu.—From the indulgence of waking dreams so horrible, I was startled by a rapping at the door of the anti-room that led from the staircase to my bedchamber. Helene, fearing she knew not what, hesitated, and dared not open it; she asked me what she should do, but I was utterly incapable of answering, and we were at length relieved from our terrors by hearing the voice of Mr. Hayward, who desired to be admitted.

“ He spoke to me with so much soothing kindness, and reasoned so properly with me,

me,

me, that tears, which had been for many hours denied me, flowed from my eyes: I dared not, however, ask—for I yet knew but very little of Mr. Hayward—I dared not ask what was become of the unfortunate Ormsby; but, as if this worthy man had read the thoughts, I had not courage to express—he gradually managed his conversation so as to bring it to the point he wanted to speak upon.—‘ I was extremely concerned, (said he), that the precipitancy of Mr. Montalbert’s manner alarmed you as it did Indeed I have told him, that I greatly blame his needless harshness, produced only by an anonymous letter, and certainly unfounded. I can easily imagine how the abrupt manner in which he spoke to you might have the effect it had, and I have at length persuaded him to believe, that without any improper attachment to Mr. Ormsby, you might be affected in the manner you were. He is become more reasonable since his passion has subsided, which was raised to a degree of frenzy by
 cerned

that infamous letter, and he seems concerned for the terror he inflicted upon you, and willing to forget it upon one positive condition.'

"Having no courage to ask what that condition was, I remained silent. Mr. Hayward thus proceeded——

'As Mr. Montalbert cannot subdue his displeasure, when he thinks it possible that Mr. Ormsby had or could be supposed to have been guilty of the presumption of pretending to you, he has thought it proper to remove him from hence immediately, and, to put an end at once to the very recollection of such a report, he insists upon it that the name of Ormsby is not mentioned in the house.'

"I sighed, but dared not ask what was the fate of this unfortunate Ormsby. . . . I felt, however, considerable relief from the manner in which Mr. Hayward spoke of him; for I was persuaded, that had my father taken any very cruel measures in regard to him, such a man as Mr. Hayward would neither have tolerated such conduct,

conduct, or, if he could not have checked it, would he have spoken of it so calmly.

“ Still, however, the sad uncertainty of what was become of him seemed so heavily to press on my heart, that it was ready to burst. I could not speak; but Mr. Hayward, who appeared to be well acquainted with the painful sensations which were probably pictured on my countenance, went on, in the most soothing manner, to tell me what was, he thought, the best part I could take for my peace of mind, and for the general tranquillity of the family.

‘ What I wish you to consider of, my dear Miss Montalbert, (said he), is, whether it would not contribute much to your future ease and comfort, could you determine, in compliance with your father’s commands, not only to mention no more of this unfortunate young man, but to resolve on appearing before your father tomorrow, at the hour he has appointed, to
hear

hear mass, with a calm and even cheerful countenance. Let him not suppose that the observance of his commands is a greater sacrifice than it ought to be—appear to think, that whatever is his pleasure ought not to be disputed, and, I think, I can venture to say, that whatever uneasiness this wicked letter has raised in the breast of your father will be at an end, as your behaviour will prove to him that the charges in it were entirely unfounded:—you will be restored to *his* confidence and to your own peace.’

“ I was still incapable of answering; but, as I remained quiet, and shed not a tear, Mr. Hayward thought he might venture to proceed.

‘ I am convinced, (continued he), that you feel the force of all I have urged; but, I believe, it is better to state to you what are my apprehensions of the consequences, if you fail of acquiring this command over yourself. It will, I fear, make your father suspect, that this malicious informer had some ground for

the assertions he or she has dared to make. It is much to be apprehended, that Mr. Ormsby, who is wholly, *I believe*, in his power, will suffer if such an imagination predominates in your father's mind ; and I should doubt whether the extreme indignation which he suffers himself to feel might not so far annihilate his tenderness for you, as to urge him even to so harsh a measure as that of sending you to a convent in Italy, and compelling you to take the veil.'

" Mr. Hayward stopped, expecting that I might by this time have so far recovered my spirits, as to be able to promise that I would attempt at least to regulate my behaviour by his advice—but I remained silent.... Rendered desperate by what I had heard, I became incapable of attending to the consequences of the step I was about to take : the moment, however, I could find voice and words, I related, in a slow and solemn tone, the dreadful truth ; but before I had entirely finished my melancholy narrative, the room turned
round

round with me, my eyes became dim, and my senses forsook me.

“ When I recovered, Helene was chafing my temples, and taking other means to bring me to myself; the Abbé Hayward was traversing the room in the agitated manner of a person who has received some alarming intelligence, and knows not how to act. When he saw that I was a little restored, he approached me, and, in a voice hardly inarticulate, said, ‘ Most unhappy young woman, this is no time to flatter—destruction hangs over you, and it is only in your own power to escape it; for without your own efforts, nobody can save you. I will not deceive you, Miss Montalbert—I will tell you what I really believe, that if your father was assured of what you have now entrusted me with, the life of Mr. Ormsby would be insufficient to satisfy his vengeance—though he would be the *first* victim. Heaven direct me for the best! (cried the good man). Heaven direct me!—What can I do?’

“ He again traversed the room in silent anguish ; but what were *his* feelings compared to mine !

“ At length he recovered himself enough to speak again with composure.

‘ Something must be done, (said he); but till I have more time to consider what, let me once more ask you, if you cannot, my dear Miss Montalbert, command resolution enough to appear before your father to-morrow with some degree of serenity?—Reflect a moment how much depends on this exertion on your part :—no otherwise than by this necessary dissimulation can you hope to avert the impending danger—danger that may so fatally affect more lives than one.’

“ I now acquired steadiness of voice enough to say, ‘ Let Ormsby live—let *him* but escape the vengeance which ought not to fall on him, and let *me*, who alone am to blame, perish under the indignation of my incensed father. One victim will perhaps satisfy him—I desire to die—and
when

when I am dead, the resentment raised by injured honour may surely be appeased.'

" That I spoke at all, and spoke calmly, though it was with the sudden sadness of despair, seemed to Mr. Hayward to be a favourable symptom. He pursued his argument, therefore, and endeavoured to convince me whatever hope remained of concealing this fatal secret, must rest entirely upon my own resolution and discretion.

" The life of Ormsby, he said, was in my hands :—he recalled to my mind the temper of my father—the fierceness of his anger—the steadiness of his resentment.... I listened and shuddered.

' If, (said he), the mere information that the suspicion of such an affection between you and Mr. Ormsby was entertained in a neighbourhood, where he cares nothing about the people, has so enraged Mr. Montalbert as to induce him to act as he has done in regard to Mr. Ormsby—what would there not be to dread from

the fury of his resentment, were he to know what you have to-night related to me - - - - -'

" I took advantage of a pause Mr. Hayward made to repeat some of the words he had used.—' Acted as he has done, (cried I, in regard to Ormsby); tell me then—I conjure you tell me—*how* has my father acted?—By what stratagem, or force, could he tear away that unhappy young man, even before he knew that there was the least ground for the charge that was made against him?—Oh, Mr. Hayward!—if you are capable of mercy—if you really pity the agonies that rend my heart, tell me, I conjure you tell me, what is become of Ormsby?—I think, that if I once knew, I should become calm—I think I could summons resolution enough to consult my own safety; but, indeed, the misery of this uncertainty is such. All my thoughts are so full of horror, that the death with which I am threatened would be a welcome release from such intolerable torture.'

‘ I solemnly assure you, (replied Mr. Hayward), that I do not know what is become of our unfortunate friend, nor, perhaps, shall I ever know. I dare not make any inquiry; and all I have been able to learn is, that, on receiving the infamous scrawl last night, your father ordered every body out of his room, and remained alone, or only with Ormsby, for some time. He then directed two of the grooms to be sent to him, and that the steward might also attend. Mr. Ormsby appeared no more. These two men, the grooms, have never been seen since; but there is no track of a carriage around the house, nor has any body been seen to leave it. The steward observes the most profound silence, and all that is known in the house is, that something has happened which has obliged Mr. Ormsby suddenly to leave it; that he has deeply offended Mr. Montalbert; and that it is required of all who would not enrage their master, and be dismissed from the family, never to men-

tion the name of Ormsby even to each other.'

' My father *did* see him ? (inquired I)—had they any conversation which urged on this precipitate violence ?'

' I believe they had, but I know nothing certainly—any attempt on my part to draw from Mr. Montalbert more than he chuses to entrust me with, would not only be abortive, but would, in all probability, deprive me of every future opportunity of softening the asperity of his resentment. Let me conjure you, my dearest Madam, if you would not hereafter reproach yourself with the fatal effects of this resentment, to exert your utmost resolution—endeavour to command yourself so as to appear to-morrow before your father . . . The second attempt will be more easy, and I trust, in a day or two, your spirits will be so much calmed, that you will be able to consider of taking the measures so necessary to be thought of for the preservation of your reputation, perhaps of your life.'

You,

‘ You believe then, (said I), that the life of poor Ormsby is safe?’

‘ Believe it!—(exclaimed Mr. Hayward)—surely I believe it To whatever extremities the unhappy prejudices or violent passions of Mr. Montalbert may drive him, and none can have greater apprehensions on that subject than I have, hitherto I hope and believe that Mr. Montalbert has taken no unjustifiable measures in regard to this luckless young man.—(Then deeply sighing, Mr. Hayward added)—In my opinion his future fate depends entirely upon you—it is in your power to save or to destroy him.’

‘ Gracious Heaven!—(exclaimed I)—what right has my father over this ill-starred young man?—*My* life may be in his power—he gave it me, and most willingly would I resign it; but Ormsby surely ought not to suffer.’

‘ Mr. Montalbert, (interrupted Mr. Hayward), will consider but little what he *ought* to do, or what he has a *right* to

do, when vengeance is in question ; but surely I need urge this subject no further—you are perfectly acquainted with his temper—you know that he is master of the country around for some miles. His servants, his dependents, his tenants, are in such habits of obeying him, that he is in some measure capable of exercising a sort of despotism, which, though frequent enough in other countries, is seldom seen in this. I will now leave you, my dear Miss Montalbert—again beseeching you to consider what I have said, and to command yourself as much as possible to-morrow.’

“ Mr. Hayward then left me, and sent to my faithful Helene to attend me, who had been absent during our conversation ; but my senses were yet stunned by the violence of the shock I had received—I could not shed a tear, and sat like a statue repeating almost unconsciously to myself—‘ Ormsby is gone !—he is lost for ever—he is condemned to ignominy and disgrace, and it is *I* who have undone

done him, who may perhaps occasion his death!’

“ I know not now by what arguments Helene at length prevailed upon me to take some refreshment, and to undress myself. I believe that by the contrivance of Mr. Hayward, who, as I afterwards found, kept a small dispensary of medicines in his own room, Helene gave me some remedy that assisted in quieting my spirits—for after passing some time in a state of mind which I cannot even at this distance of time reflect upon without horror, I sunk into insensibility, from which I was suddenly startled by a fancied noise, and awoke only to recollect all the bitterness of my destiny.”

The narrative of Mrs. Vyvian, which became every moment more interesting to Rosalie, was now interrupted by a letter which announced the arrival of Mr. Vyvian, Mrs. Bosworth, and her sister, in London. Her spirits were already agitated by recollecting scenes in which she had formerly suffered so much, and this in-

telligence contributed to overwhelm them. The visit from her family was not to be made till the second or third day after the present; there was yet, therefore, time enough for her to relate the sequel of her story; which, at the request of Rosalie, who sacrificed her own impatience to consideration for her mother's health, was postponed to the following morning.

CH A P. XVI.

MRS. Vyvian on the following day thus proceeded——

“ When I look back on the situation I was now in, I am astonished that I ever supported it—description at this distance of time could but do little justice to the state of my mind, even if I were capable of discriminating now the variety of miseries I then suffered under. It seems, on retrospection, the most extraordinary circumstance in the world, that in such a state of mind as I was in, I should have acquired resolution enough to appear before my father, as Mr. Hayward recommended, on the following day ; but this I did do ; and though I cannot but suppose that my figure and countenance bore sufficient testimony to the state of my heart,

he

he seemed determined not to notice the deadly paleness of my countenance, or the feeble and uncertain step with which I approached him: yet, when he supposed I did not remark him, he cast towards me looks of indignation and resentment, the meaning of which I could not mistake. I shuddered when I observed them, but in my turn affected to be as tranquil as before this storm that had wrecked for ever my happiness and my peace.

“ It was highly probable that the violent agitation I had undergone, as well as the dreadful uneasiness that preyed on my mind, for the fate of my unfortunate lover, would finish my inquietudes for the future, and bury in oblivion the fatal secret of this hapless affection; but this did not happen, and now every hour as it passed added such insupportable dread of what was to happen in future to the miseries of the present moment, that to exist long in such a state seemed impossible—yet were my sufferings but begun.

“ Nothing

“ Nothing could be more dreary and desolate than every object appeared round the house. It was the dark and melancholy month of November, and nature seemed to be in unison with my feelings. I looked now on the same scenes as I had so lately beheld luxuriant in foliage, and illuminated with the summer sun—the same scenes in which Ormsby had so long been a principal object. . . . Now—as the leaves fell slowly from the fallow trees, they seemed to strew his grave—the wind, as murmured hollow through the perennial foliage of the pines and firs, sounded to *my ears* as if it was loaded with his dying groans—I heard him sigh among the thick shrubs that bordered the wood walks; he seemed to reproach my calmness—yet it was not the tranquillity of indifference, it was the torpor of despair.

“ I went out alone, that I might weep at liberty; yet, when I found myself in the silent solitude of the woods, I was unable to shed a tear, but sat down on

one of the benches, and gazed on vacancy with fixed eyes, and without having any distinct idea of the objects I beheld. In these dismal rambles rain and tempest, and once or twice night, overtook me. I was careless or insensible of outward circumstances; and certainly if my father had not determined to shut his eyes to the truth, as if the only alternative was between extreme severity and total ignorance, he must have discovered from my conduct that all his suspicions did not go beyond the reality.

“ Some very fatal catastrophe would have followed the state of mind I was in, had not the pious and friendly councils of the Abbé Hayward, and the assiduous care of Helene, saved me from myself: the one exhorted me to patience, and a reliance on the mercy of Heaven; the other soothed and flattered my sickening soul with the hope of better days, and enabled me to endure the present by encouraging me to look forward to the return of Mrs. Lessington,

sington, who alone seemed to be likely to advise and succour me in a situation which every hour and every day rendered more perilous.

“ Mr. Hayward frequently followed me into the depth of the woods, argued, remonstrated, and then soothed and endeavoured to console me. I heard his arguments, and even his reproofs, with submission and calmness; but when he told me that I ought to be cheerful, to be resigned, to endeavour to conquer my affection for Ormsby, and to attempt, by every means in my power, to conceal that it had ever existed to so fatal an excess—I lost my patience, and my respect for this good man did not prevent my flying from him with something like resentment and disgust.

“ So passed a month—a wretched month, during which time the name of Ormsby had never reached my ears, save only when Mr. Hayward, in the conversation which he thought it necessary to hold
with

with me, reluctantly named him, or when I could so far command the agonies with which my heart was torn as to name him to Helene, and listen to the conjectures with which she attempted to relieve me as to what was become of him.

“ Of this, however, she knew no more than I did ; yet, from the looks and manners of the servants with whom she conversed at the times when they were necessarily altogether, a thousand vague ideas floated in her mind, to which she sometimes gave utterance with more zeal than prudence. From her I learned, that the two men who had disappeared when Ormsby was so suddenly sent away had never since returned, and that the places they filled were now occupied by others. I heard too, that though the name of Ormsby was never mentioned whenever the steward, my father’s old servant, or the housekeeper were present ; yet that the inferior servants were continually whispering strange things, and that the
people

people in the neighbourhood talked of nothing else ; some of them going so far as to say, that inquiry ought to be made by people authorised, for that Mr. Ormsby had certainly been spirited away ; while others gave dark hints, that, considering the revengeful temper of Mr. Montalbert, it would be well if something worse than being spirited away had not befallen the poor young man.

“ All this I heard with alternate anguish and depression, of which it would be difficult to convey any idea to another. The fatal predilection that I had for Ormsby was then known, for no other reason could be given for such conduct towards him as was imputed to my father. I now saw none of the neighbours, for of the very few who had been accustomed to visit at the house, not one at this time approached it, and as I believed curiosity would have prompted them to come if they had no other motive, I thought it certain that my father had taken measures to prevent their visits. This I was not
displeased

displeased at, for *their* looks would have been more uneasy to me than were those of the servants; whenever I saw any of *them* I was covered with confusion, and fancied they would remark and account for the sad change in my face and figure; of which I could not fail to be myself conscious.

“ But if I fled thus from the observation of servants, what was my fear when compelled to appear before the severe and scrutinising eyes of my father?— I had always an awe approaching to dread of him, even in those comparatively happy days when no reproaches of conscience assailed me. Now I endeavoured to attend on him with the same assiduity as I used to do before Ormsby became a sharer in the task, or rather undertook it entirely; but whether it was that my timidity made me awkward, and that, therefore, I was incapable of acquitting myself as I formerly did, or whether my father, more really angry than he chose to avow, took these occasions to vent in
peevishness

peevishness some part of the resentment and indignation he felt. Certain it is, that his harshness and asperity were almost insupportable, and the unkind expressions he sometimes used, the looks of rage and disdain he cast upon me, were not unfrequently such as affected my spirits so much as to throw me into fainting fits. from which I reproached my poor Helene for recalling me. . . . Death, which alone seemed likely to end my miseries, I continually invoked, and I know not what would have been the consequence of such a series of present suffering, added to the dread of the future, had they continued much longer.

“ Yet before the return of Mrs. Lessington, to which only I looked forward with the least hope of mitigating my woes, I had some trials of fortitude to encounter more difficult to sustain than any I had yet experienced.

“ At the end of a long row of elms, of which now a few single trees only remain,

main, you recollect a high mount now planted with firs, poplars, and larches, into which, as it is railed round, nobody now enters ; you perhaps remember too, the very large yew tree that shadows a great space of ground near it, and which is also railed round. That mound covers the ruins of a small parish church, and that yew tree was in the church-yard.

“ An avenue of ancient trees was terminated by this church, at the distance of something more than a quarter of a mile from the house. It was merely the chancel of a larger edifice which had belonged to a monastery, some of the ruins of which remained scattered over the ground, and when I and my brother were children, we had been told by the servants many of those legends that almost always belong to such places. It was said too among them, that beneath these vestiges of buildings, which were not considerable above the ground, there were arched vaults, and subterraneous passages, which
formerly

formerly served as burial places for the religious persons of this monastery. Their coffins, placed in niches along the walls, had been formerly seen by several persons, who had given a very terrific account of the skeletons in these dismal recesses; accounts which were now traditional in the neighbouring villages, and were of course greatly exaggerated.—The mournful relics that had been seen under the earth were imagined to visit its surface, and the place was universally believed to be haunted. The style of the building that remained, where light was admitted through long windows obscured by pieces of coloured glass, and now darkened by the ivy that mantled almost the whole edifice; the walls of great thickness, in some places green with the damps that continually streamed from the roof, in others marked with the remains of Latin sentences, surrounding the half-effaced representations of the crucifixion, all contributed to give an air of wildness and horror to this almost-deserted building;

ing; where, though at the Reformation, as it is called, under Henry the Eighth, it became a parish church, yet service was performed in it only once a year, as a mere matter of form, for the parish contained only the house of Holmwood, and three cottages belonging to my father, and since pulled down. So that when it was his pleasure to destroy this small church entirely, and unite the parish it belonged to with another, there were none to oppose the act of parliament he solicited and obtained for that purpose. At the time, however, of which I am speaking, this desolate spot inspired all that melancholy sort of horror which naturally gives rise to the reports of supernatural appearances; there was not a servant who would on any account have gone thither of a night, and even the gardeners and workmen, who were at any time occupied near it, related strange stories of uncommon noises, as of mourning and complaint, and more than once have ran in terror to their fellow labourers, declaring

claring that some obscure figures had issued from the vaults beneath, and then melted into air.

“ Such was the stern spirit of my father, and he so little knew how to make allowances for any weakness which he had never felt, that had any domestic betrayed fears of this sort before him, they would have been dismissed with disgrace; nor did my brother and I, while children, though we knew all the legends of the country, ever dare to speak to him of the stories we had been taught. Thus compelled to stifle our infantine fears, they were gradually subdued as our reason became stronger; and *we* were accustomed not only to find *our* way in the dark all over the extensive old buildings of Holmwood, but to traverse without fear the avenue that led to, and even the area that surrounded, the ruined church, though we credited the probable account, that in the vaults beneath rested the remains of the former inhabitants of the decayed monastery.

“ At the time I am now speaking of, I mean about six weeks after the departure of Ormsby, such was the gloomy temper of my soul, that I was pleased only with horrors, and it was through the avenue of elms, and towards the ruins that I now frequently directed my solitary walk. I observed, however, that when, in compliance with Helene’s earnest entreaty, I told her which way I was going, she shuddered and turned pale; and if I seemed disposed to go thither, when she was with me, she would find every possible excuse, such as that it was dewy from the high grass, or dirty, or the wind was in our faces, or any other objection she could raise against our taking that path; but none seemed to suit *me* so well. I found a melancholy sort of satisfaction in indulging the sad thoughts that incessantly pressed on my mind, in a place where I was sure none would interrupt my sorrows: even the labourer, fatigued with the toils of the day, or the benighted traveller from one village to another, would

would not, to save a longer journey, cross my father's grounds near this place. An adventurous sportsman, perhaps, might violate the gloomy shade with his gun; but, at the season of which I now speak, the end of December, even the hostile sounds of field sports were seldom heard—a dreary and mournful silence reigned around Holmwood, for it was long since the voice of hospitality or gaiety had been heard. The rooks returning in the evening to the high elm trees that led to the church-yard, and the owls that inhabited the ivies that half mantled it, seemed to be the only living creatures that could endure the melancholy solitude.

“ My father, who had at this time an interval of ease, though the asperities of his temper were now seldom mitigated, sometimes released me from my attendance after dinner early enough to allow me to take my solitary walk before it was too dark.

“ The intelligence I had received on this particular evening from Mr. Hay-
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ward,

ward, that he had heard Mrs. Lessington would be at home in two or three days, had given some relief to my spirits, and, rather less oppressed than usual, I strolled almost mechanically up the avenues. It was a calm and still evening—so still, indeed, that every bird was heard whose slender feet perched on the leafless boughs, or flitted among them, and the bells of the sheep folding in the distant fields, and the remoter sound of a mill and mill stream, were brought in low murmurs to the ear.

“ The well-known objects around me were becoming indistinct, but I continued to walk slowly on—I even sat down for a few moments on the remains of a rustic tomb, and listened to the dull sighing of the wind as it sung round the buttresses, and waved the black boughs of the old yew tree. As I sat musing, I recollected the stories I had often heard of spectres being seen, and strange noises being heard round these receptacles of the dead.—So little pleasure had I in looking forward

to any thing that life could now afford me, so long had my thoughts been accustomed to consider death as the only end of all my miseries, that I felt no horror in the idea of seeing, or, if it were possible, of conversing with departed spirits. A sort of chilly and shuddering sensation, however, warned me to return before it was quite dark to the house. I arose from the mass of broken stone on which I had been sitting, and, advancing a few paces to return into the elm avenue, I fancied I saw a form glide before me among the trunks of the trees; but beneath the trees it was so dark, that I could not distinguish what it was. I continued, however, to gaze steadily on the place where I fancied this shape had appeared: the illusion was over—I saw nothing. Without any emotion of fear I proceeded, therefore, exactly to that spot, for it was my direct path to the house; I entered it, and, looking down the avenue, again fancied I saw an object moving at a distance about fifty

yards beyond me ; but almost immediately my attention was attracted by something white that lay just before me in the path. It seemed to be a book, a letter, or a folded handkerchief : I stooped and took it up—it was a sheet of paper, folded like a large letter, and tied with a bit of black ribband. The circumstance rather surprised than alarmed me : I wondered what it could be, because I knew that the path was never frequented, or at least never by persons who were likely to drop a paper. I put it into my pocket, and went hastily towards the house ; when I got thither, I found my father had been inquiring for me, and I soon discovered that his temper was much disturbed. For more than two hours I was compelled to stay with him, and to listen to reproaches and sarcasms uttered with the utmost ill-humour. Alas ! I should have borne these more calmly, had I not felt that I deserved his indignation ; but now they pierced my very soul.—At length, however,

ever, I was dismissed to my own room, where the vision, or fancied vision, of the evening, immediately recurring to me, I hastily drew the paper from my pocket. Ah, Rosalie! imagine the sensations with which I read these lines——

‘Vivo oh Dio!—ma più non ti vedrò—
Prima di scriverti in questo modo, pensa quante pene, e quanti martiri bisogna aver sofferti, o più tosto che il tuo bel cor non fa riflessione sopra la nostra sorte tiranna Abbia cura della tua preziosa salute; ora non si può far ’altro per il sventurato O.’

‘I exist—but we never meet again!—
Think what I must have endured before I could write thus, or rather do not reflect on our inevitable miseries, but take care of your health—it is all you can now do for the unhappy O.’

“The writing appeared to be Ormsby’s; but the lines were crooked, and the letters ill-formed, as if they had been traced by a weak and uncertain hand. As I gazed on the paper, that, and every object round

me, swam before my eyes——again I read the words, again attempted to recal what I had seen, or supposed I had seen, in the elm walk, and it seemed possible that it was Ormsby himself—for who else could have appeared there?—Yet, from whence did he come?—Where had he so long been confined, or how could he now escape?—If it were indeed himself, why did he not approach?—if it had been but to have spoken one word to me, with the assurance that he lived. . . . Ah! it could not be Ormsby!—Ormsby would never have seen me so near him, and have left me to tears, conjectures, and terrors; but if it were not himself, who could have been in the avenue?—Who could have written the billet I found there, in a language in which, though Ormsby himself was only a scholar, no other person in the house, except my father and the Abbé Hayward, knew a syllable?—Who was likely to write a hand resembling Ormsby's?—Who, indeed, except my father, whose fingers being entirely disabled by
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the gout, had almost always employed Ormsby to write, knew his hand well enough to attempt an imitation of it?—Any conjecture that led to a supposition of its being a forgery, seemed even more improbable than that it should be Ormsby himself—if any thing could be more improbable than that he was so greatly changed as to be so near me, and yet fly from me. This uncertainty, and my own conjectures, equally endless and uncertain, soon became so insupportable, that my reason once more threatened to forsake me, and I believe I should have lost it, had I not communicated to Helene what had happened, and explained to her the purport of the letter. As I did this, I observed her countenance change; she grew pale and trembled—then, in an hurried way, said in her own language, that I should recollect how often she had entreated of me not to go into the elm walk—not to frequent the ruins about the chapel.

“ I eagerly inquired what those precautions had to do with what I was now talking of. Helene, trembling and weeping, at length told me, it was the general opinion in the family, that Mr. Ormsby had been killed in attempting to resist the force that was used to remove him from the house ; that he was buried in the vaults under the old church and ruined monastery ; and that his spirit had been frequently seen since. This at once accounted for the apprehensions I had seen Helene so often express, and renewed all the terrors for the life of Ormsby, which the assurances of Mr. Hayward had a little appeased. . . . My heart sunk within me, and again I seemed to be on the point of losing my misery and my existence together. The horrible idea thus conveyed, could not be a moment sustained without forcing the mind to an effort for its own relief. The moment I had recovered myself enough to reflect, my reason returned to dissipate this hideous

deous phantacy. I might have believed that I had seen the shade of Ormsby lingering about the place of his interment—for to what weakness might not such sufferings as I underwent subject the understanding? but I knew that the spirit of the dead write no letters, and by whom but Ormsby could the lines I held have been written? Who, but either himself, or some agent he had employed, could have dropped the unsealed paper I had found? As soon as the tumult of my spirits were a little calmed by these reflections, I took courage to question Helene farther on the reports that had passed on this subject in the family.

“ She told me that ever since the sudden disappearance of my unhappy lover, strange stories had been whispered in the family at every opportunity, when the inferior domestics had an opportunity of escaping from the observation of the steward and housekeeper; that the most frightful reports had got abroad in the

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country;

country; and that it was every where believed that Mr. Ormsby had fallen the victim of my father's violence, and had been buried in the vaults: a report which was the more strongly credited, as the two men who disappeared with him had never returned. To this account, which was nearly the same in substance as that which she had at first related, she added many wild stories of noises heard, and fights seen, every one of which some person might be brought to attest. Nothing could be more dreadful than to reflect on these impressions among the neighbours, which, from the account given by Helene, seemed to be gaining ground, and might not improbably bring on some inquiry that might irritate to phrenzy such a temper as my father's, and overwhelm me with shame and disgrace."

The recollection of this part of her life, added to the fatigue of having spoken so long, was more than Mrs. Vyvian could now sustain; and Rosalie once more prevailed.

vailed upon her to delay the rest of her strange and melancholy narrative till the next day, which was likely to be the last they should uninterruptedly pass together.

CHAP. XVII.

THE narrative of Mrs. Vyvian thus went on——

“ I had not yet recovered any degree of composure after the strange circumstance of finding the letter, which I continually read and studied, when some of the apprehensions, to which the intelligence I had got from Helene had given rise, were but too fatally realised. Such, indeed, were the various tortures in which I had been kept for some time, that it is astonishing, in the situation I was in, how I survived it. I might well, in the words of a favourite air which I should have sung, had not my heart been too heavy to find relief even in music——

Lasciami,

Lasciami*, o Ciel ! pietoso,
 Si non ti vuoi placar,
 Lasciami respirar,
 Qualche momento !

Rendafi col riposo,
 Almeno il mio pensar,
 Abile a soffrenar,
 Nuovo tormento.—

“ I know not whether my mind dwelt most continually on the circumstance of the letter, or on the dread of the inquiry that might be made from the reports that had been spread in the country. In regard to this last, however, I endeavoured to persuade myself, that Helene, understanding English imperfectly, might misconceive or exaggerate the expressions made use of by the rest of the servants; and while I attempted to mitigate part of my anxiety by this persuasion, I endea-

* *Metafisico.*

voured to acquire courage to investigate the grounds of the other ; and for this purpose I took again and again the same walk alone, for not even Helene's sincere attachment to me would, I knew, have engaged her to have accompanied me without great reluctance. I thought too, that if by any strange means which I could not comprehend, nor hardly think possible, Ormsby yet lingered round Holmwood, he would be prevented by the presence of a third person from speaking to me. Life was now in my eyes of so little value, that to fear, unless it were fear of my father, I was insensible ; and I believe that I should have met with indifference, or rather torpor, the most terrific figures that imagination has ever dressed out to deter from crimes, or to enforce repentance. In my solitary and gloomy walks, however, I saw no more any object like that which had before alarmed me, nor did I hear any noise but such as I could easily account for. Every evening, without any regard to the weather, or to any thing

thing but the precautions necessary in regard to my father, I took the same lonely walk, and for many evenings returned more astonished and depressed ; for the longer this mystery remained unexplained, the more I became the prey of wild conjectures and tormenting solicitude.

“ But imagine, my Rosalie, if it be possible, imagine what I suffered, when, about five days after the circumstance of my finding the letter, I was alarmed by the sudden entrance of Helene into my room, who, breathless with some new terror, endeavoured to explain something, which it was long before I understood. At length I made out, that a neighbouring gentleman in the commission was come, as the servants believed, to apprehend my father, with peace officers, for that a regular complaint had been laid, it was not known by whom, of the sudden disappearance of Ormsby ; and at length, the accusation of having murdered him had been so often repeated, and the clamours of the country, where

where certainly my father had many enemies, had become so loud, that the gentleman in question could act no otherwise than he did.

“ Endeavour to imagine what I endured while such a conference as this lasted, which it did for upwards of two hours; at the end of that time, the magistrates and his myrmidons departed together. Helene, who had watched them, came to tell me so: they had been out for some time with the steward and the old butler, and she was sure, she said, they had been up to the church; then they returned to the house, and, after a few moments of farther conversation with my father, quitted Holmwood apparently satisfied.

“ So confused, so mingled with horror and amazement, were all my ideas, that I recollected nothing of what passed in my mind, till I saw myself seated at table as usual to help my father, who sat opposite in his great chair; when I falteringly made the usual inquiry of the day, he did
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not answer me. I began, however, to carve as usual for him, but he fixed his eyes on my face, with a look so menacing and stern, that it was with the utmost difficulty I supported myself. . . . I looked in vain for comfort in the faces around me; the old butler looked as if he pitied, but could not assist me; and the footman seemed to be under such terror, that having made two or three awkward blunders, he received a very severe reprimand, and was ordered to leave the room. Our silent and melancholy meal was soon over, for my father eat little, and I in vain attempted to swallow. The table cloth was removed, and I collected voice enough to ask him, as nearly as I could in my usual manner, whether I should read to him?—He answered loudly and angrily—No——

“ Then, after a pause, a dreadful pause, during which I was afraid I should have sunk upon the floor, my father spoke thus——

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‘ If I thought only for one moment, that the infamous reports, which have gone forth in the country, had originated in your folly, or rather wickedness, I should not hesitate what to do. As for the ungrateful villain, who might, perhaps, have had the insolence to attempt, as a return for my receiving him into my house, to steal my daughter and my property from it, you will never see him or hear of him more, nor can a matter of self-defence be again tortured into what the laws might *here* call a crime ; but for yourself, know that it is my pleasure that you immediately prepare to receive, as your husband, a friend of mine, whose estate is such as you have no pretensions to expect, unless it be as my daughter—I will not suffer myself to suppose you have forfeited that title—on your part you will be pleased to make up your mind, and to divest yourself of a manner and behaviour which I will suffer no longer : I should have forbore to have given you my commands in regard to Mr. Vyvian, till his arrival, if I had

had

had not remarked your perseverance in a sort of conduct which *I will not understand*, - left the most terrible vengeance should follow. I have said enough—go to your own room, and learn to obey.’

“ This terrible sentence, which ended in so loud a tone as almost to stun me, deprived me for a moment of my recollection ; as soon, however, as I was able, I arose from my chair, and with difficulty reached the door, my father’s eyes following me with a look so scrutinizing and angry, that I wished at that moment the earth might open beneath my feet and swallow me for ever. I found Helene near the door ; for, alarmed by the transactions of the morning, and probably by the report of the footman, she waited there for me—without her aid I should never have got to my own room. I sat down in a state of torpid despair, which it is impossible to describe. Helene spoke to me in vain. The words I had heard, the dreadful command I had received, still vibrated in my ears, and the horrors
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of my fate were so forcibly presented to my mind, that the few distinct thoughts that passed through it pointed to suicide as the only way to escape from a destiny I was utterly unable to support. At length the tears and prayers of my faithful Helene restored to me some degree of recollection; she knelt at my feet, imploring me to have mercy on myself and on my infant, and to exert myself, if it were only to save my father from the crimes to which his furious revenge might excite him. She endeavoured to persuade me, that what he had said of Mr. Vyvian might be only a snuffe; or, that if there was such a marriage in agitation, I might delay or escape it by the interposition of Mrs. Lessington, who was probably by this time, or would be in a few days, within four miles, and from whose prudence, as well as influence over the mind of my father, much might be hoped.

“ Though I knew great part of this reasoning was fallacious, I affected to be more calm, that Helene, who would not
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be dismissed, might talk to me no longer ; but what a night did I pass ! and when I obtained by opiate half an hour of unquiet slumber, with what anguish did I recollect, the moment I awoke, all that had passed the preceding day, with what dread look forward to what might befall me in that which was begun.

“ One consolatory circumstance happened in the morning, which enabled me to go through it ; I received a letter from Mrs. Lessington, to inform me she was arrived at home, and would see me the next day. This prospect of alleviating my sufferings gave me the power of going down to dinner with some degree of resolution—I even took courage to meet the piercing eye of my severe, my sometimes cruel father, and to repeat, when dinner was over, my question, whether I should read to him?—He again answered, No—though with less harshness than the evening before : he felt himself indisposed, and said he should endeavour to sleep.

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“ I no sooner had left him, than in despite of the earnest entreaty of Helene, who incessantly besought me to have more regard to my own safety, I went into the avenue, though it was nearly dark ; an early moon, however, lit up, with faint but cheering radiance, the winter sky, and her rays glancing through the leafless trees, and falling on the gray trunks of a few arbeals and birches that were scattered among the more gloomy elms towards the middle of the line, I could have indulged my shuddering fancy in supposing them, indistinctly seen as they were, to be spectres beckoning me to the only sure asylum of all sorrows in the cemetery beyond.

“ Why should those fear who have nothing to hope?—Of beings of this world I had no dread, for I was so miserable that religion only arrested my feeble hands, or they would have been lifted against a life which might have been called a living death ; supernatural beings I had never
learned

learned to fear—if such were ever permitted to appear, I hoped it might be with tidings of mercy. Thus arguing and reflecting, I had reached the top of the avenue, and stood a moment looking at the half-ruined church, and meditating on the horrible idea taken up by the people of the country, that Ormsby was destroyed and buried in this place. What an opinion must they have of the violence and ferocity of my father's spirit! What an idea of the provocation he had received, before they could have supposed him likely to be driven to extremities so dangerous and dreadful!—It was impossible but what the cause for such vengeance must be suspected. The secret of our attachment, my disgrace and shame, then were known, or, what was nearly the same thing, guessed at, though I no longer supposed it possible that my father could for a moment harbour a thought so contrary to humanity as the destruction of the unhappy Ormsby; yet there were a thousand daggers for my heart in the

reflection that such a history was the conversation of the surrounding country, and that the real or imaginary crimes of our family were discussed by the ignorant, and enjoyed by the malicious.

“ But even these reflections were ease compared to those that assailed me when I remembered the conversation of the evening before, and repeated to myself the dreadful name of Vyvian.—There is a kind and a degree of grief that annihilates the feelings from its violent pressure, as the extremities of bodily pain are said to deprive the sufferer of sensation. This was the effect which the commands of my father had on my mind, now that alone, and amidst the silence of the night, I reflected on them—lost in the terrible contemplation of the future, I forgot the present, and was unconscious of the dreary scene around me, till I was startled from my reverie by the sight of a man, who, coming from among the ruins, slowly approached. Rivetted to the spot by fear, mingled with a strange desire to know whether

ther this was a being of another world, or whether it brought me intelligence of Ormsby, I had no power to stir. The figure approached, and, as if encouraged by my remaining where I was, spoke to me in a low voice, and said something as if entreating me not to be alarmed; but I heard only the beginning of the sentence; the voice was, I thought, Ormsby's, and a thousand sensations, which I could neither discriminate then, nor can describe now, contributed to deprive me of my senses. The predominant idea, however, was, the hazard Ormsby was in, in thus returning round the house, for of any supernatural appearance I had none.

“ On recovering some degree of recollection, I found myself on the ground, and a man kneeling by me, whom I still believed to be Ormsby, till he explained himself nearly in these words——

‘ I have long waited for an opportunity of speaking to you, Miss Montalbert—recover your recollection—your presence

of mind—the life of Ormsby depends on you.’

‘Of Ormsby?’ cried I faintly.

‘Of Ormsby! (answered he)—my unfortunate brother. . . . It is you who must either release him; who must either restore him to life and liberty, or condemn him to end his miserable days in poverty and imprisonment.’—I have not strength, Rosalie, to relate every word as it passed; suffice it therefore to tell you, that it was one of the brothers of poor, unhappy Ormsby, who related, that he had come from Ireland on finding that my father had imprisoned Ormsby for debt; and that he had declared to the elder Mr. Ormsby by letter, that he never would release him, unless, under the most positive promise, that he would go immediately to India—never again see or correspond with me, and renounce, in the most solemn manner, every claim that I might have given him to my person or my affections. This Ormsby had positively refused to do.

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My father, irritated to phrenzy by a circumstance that renewed all his suspicions, declared, in terms of the greatest violence, that Ormsby should perish in prison. His father could do nothing for him; but sent over his second son, only two years older than Ormsby, to endeavour to appease the anger of Mr. Montalbert, by engaging his brother to make the concessions that were required of him.

‘ I have now (said the young man) lingered about the place more than a fortnight, in hopes of having an opportunity of speaking to you. At the risk of my life I have attempted to make my way into the house, and probably have owed my preservation to the notion impressed upon your father’s servants, that the restless spirit of my brother, whom they supposed to have been murdered, haunted the house and gardens. . . . Now, dearest Madam, (continued George Ormsby), if you have, indeed, honoured my brother with your regard, resolve to save him—resolve to restore to my poor, unhappy

parents the peace this fatal circumstance has robbed them of.'——I asked faintly, what I could do?—He answered, that by consenting to marry the man proposed to me by my father, I should end at once the persecution of Ormsby, and secure my own peace—I shuddered, and was on the point of declaring why it was impossible for me to do this, when the noise of voices at a distance compelled him hastily to quit me. He retired again among the ruins, and I, without knowing how I found strength, walked towards the house. I met Helene and one of the men servants coming in search of me: Helene, in accosting me, trembled so she could hardly speak—I leaned on her arm and reached the house, where I had again to encounter the angry looks and fierce interrogatories of my father. I know not how I answered; overwhelmed by the scene I had just passed, I sunk once more under the violent agitation of my mind, and could hardly be said to be sensible till the soothing voice of Mrs. Lessington,

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at my bedside the next morning, restored me in some measure to my reason. But notwithstanding the perfect reliance I had on her friendship, I should never have had courage to relate to this dear friend the extent of my imprudence and its consequences ; but Helene had already told her so much, that she entered at once upon the subject as soon as I appeared in a state to attend to her ; by transferring the blame from me to my father, she reconciled me in some measure to myself, and, with some degree of composure, I suffered her to speak of what could be done in circumstances so dreadful and distressing.

“ Nothing, however, could be immediately determined upon. I agreed with her, that it was necessary her husband should know my cruel embarrassment, for without his assistance and participation she could do nothing. She gave me in the mean time every consolation in her power ; but I thought I perceived, not-

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withstanding

withstanding she evaded the conversation, that she thought I ought to relinquish every idea of ever again seeing Ormsby, and that if I could escape from the perils of my present melancholy situation, I should dispose myself to act in compliance with my father's commands.

“ Many were the conferences we now had; but probably it would have been impossible to have saved me from that death, which my father might have thought could alone wipe away the dishonour I had brought upon his family, had not Providence interfered in my favour.

“ Mrs. Leffington now met and conversed with George Ormsby: they agreed that the only means of saving his brother was to procure his renunciation of every pretension to me in whatever form my father should dictate. This I alone could engage him to do, and this at length Mrs. Leffington extorted from me in a few lines, by which I *asked* this of him—with a trembling hand, and eyes overflowing with

with tears, I signed the fatal paper. Mrs. Lessington assured me George Ormsby went immediately with it to London.— In about ten days afterwards, Mrs. Lessington, who remained at Holmwood, informed me she had heard from him; that his brother Charles was released, and on his voyage to India. There was something in all this that I could not comprehend; but I dared not trust myself either with inquiries or with conjectures— Ormsby was lost to me for ever, and I, sometimes in the bitterness of my soul, accused him of having abandoned me, though, in more reasonable moments, I was compelled to acknowledge that his stay would have been destructive to us both. . . . My father, who, as it appeared from his conduct, knew much of the truth, though the loss of my honour was yet unknown to him, became somewhat less severe towards me; yet I shrunk more than ever from his eye, and my timidity and terror must have betrayed me, if the change in my person, now every day more

evident, could have escaped observation ; but, whether it was that the violence of temper, which my father had yielded to in regard to Ormsby, had aggravated his arthritic complaints, or whether his constitution was breaking entirely up, he became at this period so ill, that a physician, who had always successfully attended him, was sent for from London ; he gave him some relief, but declared, that unless he went to town, where constant attendance could be given him, the consequence would be greatly to be apprehended.

“ The result of this advice was, that we removed to London. Thither also my friends Mr. and Mrs. Lessington removed ; and Mrs. Lessington being then near her time, it was so managed, that when the hour arrived when you, my beloved child, came into the world, you were concealed by Mrs. Lessington for three weeks, and then produced as twin with the daughter of which she was delivered, who is since dead.

“ You

“ You may imagine, my Rosalie, how very difficult it was to conceal the fatal secret of your birth—you may imagine, for I cannot describe, what were the terrors I had to encounter—the anguish of heart with which, when I had once beheld you, once pressed you to my heart, I saw you torn from me, and knew that I should never dare to call you mine, or again to shed over you the tears excited by the resemblance your infant features bore to those of your father.

“ But, on calmer reflection, I agreed with Mrs. Lessington, who represented to me incessantly, how thankful I ought to be for the good fortune with which I had saved my reputation, if not my life. The suspicions that had been entertained, in consequence of my father’s violent conduct towards Ormsby, were now, she said, blown over and forgotten. His family had reported, that so far from his having undergone any persecution from Mr. Montalbert, it was to him he was obliged for

the advantageous situation in which he was gone out to India ; that the circumstances which had given rise to such strange reports in the neighbourhood of Holmwood originated in error and misrepresentation ; and, in a word, that the Ormsbys, instead of shewing any resentment towards my father, every where made his eulogium as the benefactor of the whole family. I was not, however, the less miserable, though I owned the truth of all Mrs. Lessington urged ; and whenever I was alone, I gave way to that anguish of heart, which, while I was with her, I endeavoured to repress or conceal, because I would not be thought ungrateful, or insensible of the obligations I owed to her friendship.

“ During my father’s very severe illness, I heard no more of Mr. Vyvian—Indeed I seldom saw my father, and when it was unavoidable, only for a few minutes. Mrs. Lessington, in whom he had great confidence, and expressed a regard unusual
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for him to feel, had contrived to obtain his leave for me to stay with her while she was very ill and unable to come to me, and by this management only it was that I escaped observation at the period when I could so little bear it. As my father recovered, however, my more constant attendance was again necessary. He now sometimes ordered me to read to him, and, when he was still more at ease, to play at chess with him. I was, indeed, but a poor substitute for Ormsby or Mr. Hayward; but I fancied that the latter sometimes got out of the way, as if on purpose to make me more necessary to my father, and to leave us together.

“ It was in one of these tête-à-tête parties, that my father, without much ceremony or much preface, asked me, whether I had reflected on what he had determined upon in regard to Mr. Vyvian, who would now in a few days be in England, whither he came on purpose to receive my hand?

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“ The violent effect of this intelligence was evident on my countenance—I tried in vain to speak ; my lips refused to articulate a syllable. Not only disregarding, but enraged at the pain I seemed to feel, he declared, in a voice that made me tremble like a leaf, that if I did not determine to obey without remonstrance, or hesitation, he knew how to punish, and *would* punish me as I deserved. He added, that *I* had already been the occasion of his undergoing uneasiness, which had brought on his late illness ; of scenes the most disgraceful to his character, never sullied till he found a curse instead of a blessing in his daughter ; and that not content with having once been nearly the cause of his death, I now was disposed to complete my work, and destroy him who had given me life.—Figure to yourself, if it be possible, what I endured at this moment, and, if it be possible to carry your imagination farther, suppose what I must have suffered before I was compelled to
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give my hand to Mr. Vyvian, while my heart was devoted to Ormsby; while I would most willingly have shared with him the most obscure destiny; while I would have followed him to India, or to Nova Zembla, and have exposed myself to endure any hardships in any region of the world, rather than have been mistress of the world on condition of being the wife of Mr. Vyvian.

“ My friend Mrs. Leffington, however, and the Abbé Hayward, joined in this cruel persecution. The former removed you from my sight entirely, and sent you into the country; the latter seemed to have lost his usual humanity and tenderness, and to think that duty, which I had once violated, had now stronger claims upon me than before the fatal indiscretion I had been guilty of. From your father I heard nothing. His family reported every where that he was married to a woman of fortune, with whom he became acquainted on her voyage to India, whether she was sent for by an uncle, whose
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heiress she was. This I believed, as I had done many other stories that were among the artifices that were used to force me into this detested marriage. They succeeded but too well, or rather the extreme terror I had of my father left me no means of escape. I became then the wife of Mr. Vyvian. I have been ever since the most miserable of women; my son only, and the consolation of having sacrificed myself to duty, alone supported me. Before, however, I was driven into this miserable union, I executed, as I was then of age, a deed of gift, in which I made over, during my life, to Mr. and Mrs. Lessington, the interest of four thousand pounds, which was the gift of a relation, and which I possessed independent of my father, but without the power of alienating the principal. This is part of the money which Mr. Vyvian has so often reproached me with *wasting*, as he terms it, on begging monks and canting hypocrites; though, had I really bestowed it on my necessitous fellow creatures, I should have
 thought

thought myself well justified in such a disposal of it.

“ I had not been married above fifteen months when my father died, and left Mr. Vyvian in possession of that fortune, which was undoubtedly his chief motive for overlooking my reluctance which I repeatedly avowed to him, and which he well knew accompanied me to the altar. After my father’s death, he no longer affected to treat me with the least degree of regard. We went abroad for some years, which served in some measure to relieve and dissipate the heaviness of my heart. I had often the consolation of hearing from Mrs. Lessington, and in her letters, with the account she gave me of her family, my Rosalie, as one of that family, was always mentioned. When I returned to England, I found you, child of my fond affections, all that my fancy could form of loveliness and perfection. So many tears had my fatal error cost me, and so much I hoped had been expiated by the subsequent sacrifice I made,

that

that I trusted it was not criminal to indulge myself with a sight of you : you know how easily I enjoyed that happiness, but *I* only knew what exquisite happiness it was till you grew up, and till Charles, returning from abroad, shewed so much partiality for you, as made me tremble for the consequence. This fear, which a thousand circumstances contributed to irritate, rendered my life miserable—I thought, that as the heaviest punishment it could inflict, Heaven might permit a fatal passion to take place between you. This was the cause not only of the deep melancholy into which I fell, but of conduct which you then thought and I felt to be unkind and cruel.”

Mrs. Vyvian here ended her long narrative, and, kissing the tears from the cheeks of her daughter, she dismissed her for that day, referring till the next any farther conversation in regard to Montalbert.

CHAP. XVIII.

AT home and alone Rosalie had time to reflect on the story she had heard; and though she knew very little of the world, and Mrs. Vyvian had failed to be very minute in many parts of her story, it seemed certain that the family of Mr. Ormsby had been the principal instruments in terrifying her into a marriage, which would have rendered her life miserable even if her heart and her person had not belonged to another. The Italian letter, which was probably written in that language lest it should fall into other hands, and might have been read had it been in English; the improbability that George Ormsby should venture to appear about Holmwood, unless with the connivance of some of the family, if not of Mr. Montalbert;

talbert; and the eagerness with which Mrs. Leffington and Mr. Hayward had adopted the views of Mr. Montalbert, though they knew her situation, were a combination of circumstances which seemed to leave no doubt in the mind of Rosalie but that her mother had been betrayed by some or all of those whom she considered as her best friends. Their motives were probably good; but Rosalie could not help reflecting, that had not such been their conduct, she might now have been the acknowledged daughter of the most tender and affectionate of mothers; she might have known and been blessed by the fondness and protection of her father; and they might in a happy union have effaced the remembrance of their early indiscretion, for the death of Mr. Montalbert would soon have left his daughter at liberty, and her life would not have been passed in the miseries of such a marriage, nor her spirits have been overwhelmed with the consciousness of being the wife of one man while her whole heart was anothers.

“ I should

“ I should not then, (said Rosalie, as she considered these events), I should not then have been despicable in the eyes of Montalbert’s relations—I might have been received by *his* mother with pride and pleasure, from the hands of my own ; but now I am an outcast, and have no right to claim the protection of any human being, unless it be thine, Montalbert, and thou art far, far from me !—Heaven knows whether we shall ever meet again ! ”

A shower of tears fell from her eyes while she indulged these melancholy thoughts ; but, from longer meditation, she was roused by a short note from Mrs. Vyvian, who informed her, that her daughters had just been with her ; that they should now seldom be at liberty to meet, for that Miss Vyvian, who, for some reason or other, did not seem happy and satisfied with her sister, was to come to her mother during an excursion Mr. and Mrs. Bosworth were about to make to Scarborough.—“ She is my daughter, (said Mrs.

Mrs. Vyvian), and I cannot refuse her my protection—alas! I will fulfil to the end of my life the duties that have been imposed upon me. Hitherto the consciousness of having acquitted myself of a very arduous task, to the utmost of my power, has sustained me in many an hour of anguish; it will smooth the bed of death, and no inconvenience I can sustain, no ingratitude with which I may be repaid, shall for a moment weaken the resolution I have made to acquit myself to my own conscience. Come to me, however, my Rosalie, to-morrow, as Bab will not be here till evening; Mr. Vyvian staid only a day in London. He is now gone into the west to visit the borough for which he is representative, and is afterwards to make I know not what tour, with I know not whom, which is likely to detain him all the summer. Alas! I dare not hope that the monotonous life I lead can be pleasant to Barbara, who probably comes with reluctance that will render us both equally miserable.

miserable. How differently, my Rosalie, *could* I indulge myself with having you always with me, would our hours pass; but I will not add a word more on this subject."

Rosalie saw that, from this unlucky arrangement, she should be deprived of the consolation she might derive from the advice and conversation of her best friend, when she most wanted such comforts. The aversion that Barbara Vyvian seemed to have to her was even greater than that of Mrs. Bosworth; and on recollecting several circumstances that had happened since the estrangement the sisters had shewn towards her, Rosalie could not but imagine that they knew, or suspected, her near relationship to their mother. Ingenuous and liberal as her own heart was, she imagined not that it was possible for envy only, malignant hatred of superior excellence and beauty, to call forth the ill-humour and provoke the ill-offices of these young women, though she had
already

already had a specimen of the effect of those odious passions in the behaviour of the Miss Lessingtons, whom she once thought her sisters.

In this family she now seemed to be almost a stranger. The character of Mrs. Lessington, since the death of her husband, seemed totally changed ; and her passion for cards, and for the society of the set of people among whom she now lived, absorbed almost every other feeling but her passion for money. To Rosalie she was not only become perfectly indifferent, but seemed weary of the task of affecting sentiments she did not feel ; from the present situation of Mrs. Vyvian, it was probable she would never be able to increase the annual gift she had made as a consideration for adopting her daughter, and her former and long attachment to her, seemed, if not entirely forgotten, at least insufficient now to urge her to any exertions of friendship and attention. She seldom saw Mrs. Vyvian, and, when she did,

did, her conversation related entirely to people with whom the latter held no intercourse, and her visit appeared to be always a matter of ceremony rather than of choice. Though the solitude in which Rosalie was left was infinitely the most pleasing circumstance of her present residence, yet she could not but imagine that the style in which she was treated in the family must occasion suspicions of the truth: the difficulties of concealing for a series of years such a secret, appeared the more wonderful the longer she thought of it; but, from these meditations on the extraordinary events Mrs. Vyvian had related to her, she recovered herself only to reflect on what was to be her future fate. Her mother had been abandoned by the man to whom she had sacrificed her honour and her peace; and though probably it was to preserve her life and his own that this separation had been submitted to, though it was certain that compulsion had at first been used to bring about this cruel separation, and that reason and a respect

for the object of his unfortunate love had afterwards prevented Mr. Ormsby from making any attempt to write to her, Rosalie could not think, without extreme pain, that even *such* an attachment was not proof against time and absence. Mrs. Vyvian had said, that she believed that though Mr. Ormsby still lived, he had forgotten her entirely; she added, that she most sincerely *hoped he had*; but, as she said this, her tears fell more abundantly, and her heart seemed to feel all the bitterness that attends the conviction of being forgotten by those we have fondly loved. Rosalie thought that nothing could ever induce her even to *say*, that she wished to be forgotten by Montalbert.

It was now some weeks since she had heard from him. There had even been time for an answer to Mrs. Vyvian's letter. Should he long delay answering it, what agonies of mind should she not be exposed to; she trembled to look forward to such a possibility, and felt that it would be
difficult

difficult for her to exist long under doubts of Montalbert's affection.

When she saw her mother in the morning, it was with increased concern she observed the deep dejection into which Mrs. Vyvian had sunk ; the little strength which she had collected to enable her to relate to Rosalie what it was necessary she should know, was now exhausted, and, pale and languid, she appeared to sustain with difficulty the fatigue of leaving her bed to receive her daughters, who were to be with her at noon : the one to take leave of her again for some time, the other to become a resident in a house which offered scenes so different from those to which she had long been accustomed.

As the sight of Rosalie seemed rather more deeply to affect than to relieve her mother, she shortened her visit, and returned to her usual home, where she passed the day entirely alone ; Mrs. Lessington and her daughter being both in

town, and not likely to return till the following morning.

In the evening she sat down to write to Montalbert, and had nearly finished her letter, when a maid (for there were only two female servants in the house) came to tell her, that there was a person at the gate who desired to speak to her; who, upon her asking his business, answered that he could communicate it only to herself.

As Rosalie had no acquaintance likely to make such a visit, nor any business to transact, and as so near London there is always danger of admitting strangers, she bid the servant tell him, she could speak to no person with whose name and purpose she was unacquainted. The girl staid some time, and then returned with a piece of paper, on which was written with a pencil, "Be not alarmed—it is Montalbert, who, compelled to return in secret, has been to Mrs. Vyvian's, and finds persons with her before whom it is impossible for him to appear."

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The mingled joy and surprise, not without some alloy of fear, with which Rosalie read this, may be easily imagined; but it would be more difficult to describe, in adequate terms, the transports of Montalbert on meeting after so long an absence, or with what tenderness and gratitude Rosalie learned the purpose of his journey. As soon as they were calm enough to converse upon it, he told her that as soon as he had received Mrs. Vyvian's letter, he determined to come over himself to England at every hazard.—“ It was not very easy, (said he); to prevail on my mother, who has, unluckily for me, projects in her head for establishing my fortune, which made her more unwilling to allow of my absence; but a young Sicilian nobleman, with whom I was brought up, and who is distantly related to my mother, was exactly at that period returning to Sicily for a few months. I communicated my distress to him, and he managed the difficulty so well, that I obtained.

tained a short leave of absence, and am now supposed to be with him in Sicily. A thousand circumstances may happen to betray me; but I trust much to the friendship and prevoyance of my friend to guard against detection at present; and, for the future, I know my Rosalie will not shrink from any trial of that affection which makes the happiness of my existence—even though a greater sacrifice were required of her than to quit her present abode.”

The answer that Rosalie gave to this was, that with him every place and every country would be equally pleasant to her. He then explained to her his views.—“Unable to live without you, (said he), I have never ceased, since I have been in Italy, to meditate on the means of conciliating my happiness, and the deference I owe my mother. That friend, of whom I have just been speaking, is now master of his fortune; he has offered me a small, but beautiful villa in
Sicily,

Sicily, about seven miles from Messina, and not more than two and a half from the sea. There you may live, my Rosalie, unremarked and unquestioned ; and there I can pass months with you, without incurring, on the part of my mother, any suspicion, or any other remonstrance, than must in every event arise from my refusal of the match she wishes to make for me : when, however, she finds I am determined, and loses her apprehensions of my forming some attachment to an Englishwoman and a Protestant, I shall be left at liberty to wander about Italy occasionally as I used to do ; and we may be happy at the present with each other, without risking the loss of that prosperity hereafter, in which it is the first wish of my heart to place you."

This plan appeared to Rosalie not only practicable, but delightful. The unfeigned pleasure with which she embraced it seemed to redouble the satisfaction with which Montalbert expatiated on their future prospects : he appeared, indeed, to

have thought of every thing, and settled what should be said to persons in England, to account for her departure. It was to be given out, that Mrs. Vyvian had procured for her a situation in a foreign family of distinction, who were desirous of having a young Englishwoman as instructress to their daughters; an establishment, which, as Rosalie Lessington was left entirely without fortune, was extremely advantageous and desirable.—However improbable such an arrangement might appear to those who were acquainted with Italian customs and manners, Rosalie and Montalbert agreed, that there were none of that description among those who were likely to inquire of the Lessington family; she had appeared, indeed, so little in their societies, that it was probable she would soon be wholly forgotten.

Mrs. Bosworth and Miss Vyvian were certainly more likely to inquire after her with more active malignity, and doubting any story that was at all unlikely to form conjectures

conjectures to her disadvantage ; but, as the journey of Montalbert, at this period, was unknown to them, as they had no communication with the Lessington family, and were both too proud to annex any consequence to Rosalie, except what she had derived from their fears of their brother's or their mother's too great affection for her, it was probable that when they saw her, and heard of her no more, they would cease to think about her.

It was, however, a very inconvenient circumstance to them, that the presence of Barbara Vyvian prevented Montalbert's seeing her mother, with whom it was so necessary for him to consult. As he could not stay more than a week in England, there was not a moment to lose. Many purchases were to be made for Rosalie, as well as many precautions to be taken ; and it was proper that Mrs. Vyvian and Mrs. Lessington should meet to adjust several points relative to a person in whom both were interested.

After some debate how to obtain admittance to Mrs. Vyvian, it was agreed that this could be done only by the means of Mr. Hayward. To him, therefore, Montalbert immediately wrote, engaging him to meet him at a tavern early the following morning ; then reluctantly, and not without her repeating her remonstrances on the impropriety of his staying any longer, he took leave of Rosalie, and retired for the night to the house, where, in pursuance of his appointment, Mr. Hayward came to him the next day at six o'clock.

They together contrived so well, that Mrs. Lessington was admitted to the apartment of her friend without any suspicion on the part of Miss Vyvian ; and in a few days every necessary arrangement was made, and Rosalie ready to depart.

There were in England only two persons, of whom to take leave for so long a time, perhaps for ever, gave her severe pain. These were her real mother, for whom her affection seemed to be greater
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than if she had been accustomed always to consider her in that endearing relationship, and the eldest Mr. Lessington, from whom she had for so many years received instruction, and towards whom she had been used to look for future protection and regard. To him, however, she could have no opportunity of saying farwel, as he was gone into Wales with a young man of fortune, from whom he had expectations of preferment. Rosalie dared not even write to him, as Mrs. Lessington, for some reason or other, objected to it; she was compelled, therefore, to go without bidding him adieu.

Her parting with her mother was attended with many tears on both sides; but each wished to shorten a painful scene, which it was not safe long to continue, as Rosalie and Montalbert were introduced into the house by stealth. This sad farwel being over, they got into a hackney coach with their baggage, and being set down at an inn in Holborn, a quarter of the town where Montalbert was little likely

to be observed by any of his acquaintance, they there found his servant waiting with a post chaise according to his orders, and immediately proceeded on their way to Dover.

CHAP. XIX.

THE fatigue of travelling, and the sufferings from sea-sickness, were rendered supportable to Rosalie by every care and attention which vigilant love could dictate. Having recovered from the latter, and wondered at the novelty which a French town presents to one who never before crossed the channel, the travellers proceeded after a few days rest, to Paris, and from thence to Lyons. Rosalie, though delighted with her journey, and acquiring new ideas at every step, was impatient to proceed, because she dreaded nothing so much as that the mother of Montalbert should discover, by his protracted stay, that he had been to England; while he, more solicitous for the health of his lovely wife,

wife, than influenced by any other motive, regulated his journey rather by her convenience, than by the necessity of appearing in proper time from his supposed Sicilian voyage, leaving to his friend, the Prince of ———, the care of keeping up appearances for him as well as he could.

Had not apprehensions of what might happen to embitter his future felicity a little derogated from the enjoyment of the present, it would have been difficult to have found a happier being than Montalbert. While he pointed out to Rosalie the beauty of the country through which they were passing, every scene, every view, seemed to acquire new charms: the pleasure which the varied prospects of nature gave to her young and unadulterated heart, the desire of information she expressed, and the sense and solidity of her remarks, communicated to him delight more exquisite than that which he felt in contemplating the beauty of her form and face, which, he could not but observe, attracted universal

universal admiration wherever she appeared, even in the haste of a journey, and under the few advantages of a travelling dress.

In France, superior or even common beauty is generally much noticed, and almost at every post town : Montalbert heard some observation on the loveliness of *la jeune Anglaise* ; or, if they remained in any city more than a day, had an attempt made by some gay young man or other to be introduced to his notice.

From these sort of acquaintance, however, Montalbert shrunk, with a sensibility unusual on such occasions to his natural character, which was open, unsuspecting, and sociable. He not unfrequently was sensible of something like jealousy, for which he failed not to reason with himself ; but still his dislike of the adulation which he saw likely to be offered to his wife, wherever she appeared, conquered the sense he had of the absurdity of feeling such a sentiment in regard to her, who was all innocence and simplicity ; who certainly lived but to please
him,

him, and was so unconscious of her personal attractions as not to have the least idea of the reasons which made him avoid every sort of society on the road. She imputed his shunning it, to the fear he had, lest he should be met by some of his former acquaintance, who might betray to his mother his present expedition.—There was, however, in this reserve of Montalbert's less of personal jealousy than of another sentiment. The mind of Rosalie, unadulterated by the false refinements of modern education, and yet new to the world, seemed, to her husband, capable of being adorned with all that lends grace to beauty, and gives perfection to genius. She had seen so little of society since her short residence near London, that the bloom of the mind (if such an expression may be allowed) had not been tarnished by any commerce with inferior society, or the common studies of a circulating library. Her natural understanding was excellent, and she had more judgment than generally attends on so much genius

genius as she possessed ; but hitherto this judgment had been unexercised, and this genius dormant.

The little she had read was but ill-calculated to form the first, and the society she had been usually among, had allowed her little scope for the latter : but, at a very early period of her life she became conscious, that such sort of people as she was usually thrown among, people who only escape from dullness by flying to defamation, were extremely tiresome to her, though she saw that nobody else thought so, and suspected herself of being fastidious and perverse. The cold, and sometimes contemptuous treatment she had met with from her supposed sisters, the little real affection she had ever found from the persons whom she believed to be her parents, had rendered her timid and diffident.—As nobody but Mrs. Vyvian seemed to love her, she supposed that to none but Mrs. Vyvian she seemed worthy of affection. Since the explanation that had been given all the passages of
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her former life appeared in a new light, and she accounted for the indifference of her supposed, and the tenderness of her real, parent.

This extraordinary discovery was a frequent topic of conversation between her and Montalbert as they pursued on their journey ; and they often canvassed the circumstances that would, if the narrative of Mrs. Vyvian had been less authenticated, have given rise to incredulity.—Montalbert, when he first heard it from Rosalie, had remarked these circumstances—“ It is strange (said he) that the account you have of your father’s present situation is so vague, so indistinct, that you have no clue to guide you even to the certainty of his existence, none by which you can identify yourself to him. I can make every allowance for the singular circumstances in which Mrs. Vyvian was placed ; for the timidity of her temper, and for the violence of my grandfather, whom I have always heard represented as a tyrant, who was not to be, would not
be,

be, contradicted. Still it appears equally unfortunate and strange, that she omitted to tell you whether he knew of your birth? whether the family of Ormsby were apprised of it? ”

In answer to these remarks, the justice of which she however acknowledged, Rosalie bade him recollect, how much of all the circumstances most interesting to her might be unknown, even to Mrs. Vyvian herself.

“ When I remember (said she) the countenance and manner of my mother, when she recalled those scenes in which she suffered so cruelly ; when I think how little capable she was, even at this distance of time, of dwelling on those parts of her story, where she had occasion to name my unfortunate father, and the awe she had of her own, as well as the tyranny she has since experienced from Mr. Vyvian, and the necessity there has ever been for secrecy as to a part of her former life, which would undoubtedly have aggravated her actual

tual sorrows, I cannot wonder, though, perhaps, I may have occasion to lament, the incomplete information this dear unhappy parent has given me. I have seen her lips tremble, and cold and death-like dew on her temples, while, in a languid voice, she was relating what I have repeated to you ; and I know that no motives less powerful than her love and her fears for me could have engaged her to write as she did to you. Long years of sorrow have so broken her spirits, that the most gloomy ideas sometimes take possession of her mind ; she trembles, lest incidents in her life, for which surely she has already been punished sufficiently, should still draw the anger of Heaven on her children, as well as hazard her future happiness. She thinks, that she should not have deceived Mr. Vyvian ; though, had she not done so, there is no imagining what might have been the consequence from the furious temper of her father ; and the consciousness of having done so.

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has made her patiently submit to very unworthy treatment—offering (to use her own pathetic phrase) her sufferings as a sacrifice to the God whom she had offended, and hoping their bitterness and duration might expiate the errors of her early life.—From hence I account for many parts of my mother's conduct, (continued Rosalie), that before appeared mysterious. Her severe penances; her voluntary resignation of the world, and her patient submission to the undutiful and even cruel conduct of her daughters; and from the pains these ladies took to alarm her about their brother's attachment to me, though ignorant of all the agonies they were inflicting, I have an explanation of that forced and involuntary neglect of me, which rendered me so very wretched for some time, and of which I am persuaded nothing but this cruel idea could have induced her to assume even the appearance."

Montalbert listened silently to this natural and sensible vindication of conduct,
which

which appeared to him more extraordinary and less accountable than it did to Rosalie. He thought it, indeed, almost impossible that Mr. Vyvian should be so ignorant of his wife's former attachment as he seemed to be ; and he was sure that her father had known, if not all, yet so much of the truth, as had induced him to act in concert with Ormsby's family, or at least to compel them so to act with him as to have saved his daughter's honour at the expence of her happiness.

The conversation on this subject was frequently renewed during the progress of their journey, and the tears of Rosalie as often flowed from the recollection of the sad state of spirits and health in which she had left her mother. So great were Mrs. Vyvian's apprehensions of accident, that might discover the secret so long cherished like a serpent in her bosom, that she had desired Rosalie and Montalbert not to write to her on the way, thus depriving herself of what she owned would be one great alleviation of the restraint
and

and misery under which she was condemned to repine. The moments of reflection, therefore, on the uneasy hours of this beloved parent, were the only moments that passed without pleasure, amounting sometimes to rapture, when, as they approached the Alps, the most sublime and magnificent views of nature were opened to her astonished view.

Accustomed of late to the flat, monotonous, and uninteresting views round London, she had frequently sighed for the more animating landscapes of her native country, and had no ideas of beauty superior to that which is formed by those green and undulating hills, in some places fringed half-way up by beech woods, in others rearing their turfy mounds, covered with sheep on one side above the once impenetrable forests of the weald, on the other gradually declining towards the apparently boundless ocean that forms the English channel.

But when she saw the rich and luxurious country, which nature, “ with all her great
works

works about her," spreads before the astonished traveller, between Lyons and Civita Vecchia, the port from whence Montalbert determined to embark for Sicily, in order to avoid both Rome and Naples, her mind was exalted by scenes so much superior to any she had ever formed an idea of either from the efforts of the pen or the pencil, she seemed transported to a world of higher rank in the universe than that she had inhabited while she was in England; and she was of an age and disposition to forget, or at least be indifferent to those circumstances which can hardly fail to remind English travellers, that, though other countries may have more bold and attractive scenery, their own is that where life is enjoyed with the greatest comfort.

Arrived at Civita Vecchia, after an absence of ten weeks, from England, Montalbert felt some degree of uneasiness when he knew he must hear from his friend, the Count d'Alozzi, what had passed during his absence. From this he was relieved
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by finding a servant of the Count's waiting for him with a small vessel hired to convey him and Rosalie to Messina, where the Count waited his arrival, that, after Rosalie was fixed at the habitation he had prepared for her, they might return together to Naples.

Montalbert, who now saw himself freed from the painful solitudes that had so long perplexed him, would not, however, listen to Rosalie's entreaties to embark immediately ; but, fearful of exposing her too soon to sea-sickness after the fatigue of so long a journey by land, he remained a few days at the port, while Rosalie, who had no terror so great as that of meeting the mother of Montalbert, and no idea how far she was from her, concealed herself at the inn where she lodged, and could not, without alarm, suffer Montalbert to quit her for a moment.

Montalbert, however, knew that this was not a place where it was likely he should be known, remained with great

tranquillity for three days. All seemed to favour their voyage, which he considered, not without some pain, must be twice as long as if he had sailed from the Bay of Naples. The weather, however, was mild, and the wind favourable; and a voyage begun thus propitiously was as happily concluded, though not till they had been eight days at sea. On the evening of the last, they entered, by as bright a moon that ever enlightened the swelling waves of the Mediterranean, the port of Messina. Never did the magnificent spectacle it afforded give more delight than Rosalie felt, as, sitting upon deck, Montalbert pointed out to her the beauty of the scene: the inconveniencies and tediousness of the voyage were no longer remembered. As the vessel slowly approached the shore, every object, in the beautiful bay, was distinctly visible; the bright light of the moon fell on the long line of magnificent buildings that overlook the ———, above which rose the mountains, whose outline was boldly marked

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ed in the deep blue æther, while Etna, no otherwise distinguished than by its towering grandeur, rose sublimely above the rest. The sea, calm as the Erculean above it, scarce broke in trembling lines as it approached the shore, but seemed to be with all nature in deep repose. At the distance of two or three miles were seen floating lights of the fishermen employed in taking the *pisca spada*, or sword-fish, which gave to the gently undulating tide the appearance of being enchanted, and of bearing fairy lights on its bosom.

Arrived at the lodgings provided for him by the active friendship of his friend, the Count d'Alozzi, Montalbert saw his beloved Rosalie in safety, and all his cares were for the present suspended ; but this could not, he knew, last long. He had many acquaintances at Messina, and many people were there occasionally who knew his mother ; it would, therefore, be unsafe for him to appear publicly with his wife, and, after one day of repose at his lodgings, they removed in a carriage, with

which they were accommodated by the Count, to the villa he had lent them, at the distance of hardly three miles from Meffina, where they found every thing that could contribute to their convenience; and were, in a few days, as much settled as if they had already inhabited this enchanted spot for for many years.

CHAP. XX.

WHILE Montalbert felt himself highly gratified and obliged by the care his friend had taken to provide every thing in their new abode that could render it convenient and agreeable to Rosalie, she was never weary with contemplating the beauty of the scenery around her. A garden, which even the false Italian taste could not spoil, arose behind the house, and its orange trees fringed the foot of a hill, which would in England have been called a mountain. Even the verdure of England was in some measure enjoyed here amid the glowing suns of Italy; for the higher lands are refreshed by dews, which prevent their being parched like the plains. Beyond the enclosure,

shrubs, which are carefully cultivated in England, grew spontaneously, and formed a natural wilderness of the gayest colours and lightest foliage. From hence the most glorious view presented itself that imagination could picture: the sea, and the opposite coast of Calabria; the Lipari islands; Strombolo, marked by a black wreath of curling smoke staining the mild and clear sky; innumerable vessels scattered about the blue expanse of water; and the faro of Messina giving to the whole a new and singular feature, connecting the varieties of an extensive sea view with a port, seemed almost to unite the island to the opposite continent.

Divested of every care that related to the past, save only her solicitude for Mrs. Vyvian, Rosalie would have fancied herself in Paradise, had not Montalbert been reminded by the Count of the necessity of their immediately departing together for Naples.

This zealous friend had forborne to visit them till some days after their being settled

settled in their new habitation. He appeared to feel for Rosalie all that respectful admiration which beauty and sweetness, like hers, naturally inspired. Her manner of speaking Italian was particularly interesting to the Count, who seemed to be delighted to instruct her : he lamented to her the cruel but necessary representations that he thought himself obliged to make to Montalbert, that he must either determine to go back to Naples, or give up the plan of concealment which had already cost him so much trouble. Rosalie, in her ingenuous and interesting manner, confessed their obligations to him, but sighed, and with difficulty restrained from tears; while acknowledging the truth of his observation, she trembled at the necessity of yielding to them.

Montalbert, with whom reason and love were at variance with each other, became every day more gloomy, penfive, and uneasy. Sometimes he determined to hazard every thing rather than leave her. “ After

all, (said he, as he entered into these arguments with himself)—after all, what is it that I am contending for?—for what is it that I am sacrificing those hours that will return no more?—for money which I may never enjoy—for high prosperity which is not, that I know of, conducive to real happiness. Is it not true, that a day, an hour, at this season of my life, is worth half an age towards its close?—Yet I am throwing away these precious hours of youth and health, in hopes of being a very rich man hereafter.”

These arguments, however, whatever might be their solidity, if tried by the maxims of Epicurean Philosophy, sometimes yielded to other considerations.—He was not devoid of ambition; nor could he wholly divest himself of that sort of attachment towards his mother, which, though it had more of fear than of love in it, had become a sort of principle from habit.

His frequent fits of silence, his melancholy looks, and long solitary walks by
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the sea side, the evident irresolution and deep depression he laboured under, gave to Rosalie the most poignant uneasiness. She sometimes was afraid of increasing these symptoms of a mind, ill at ease by appearing to notice them; at other times she ventured gently to remonstrate with him. At length, after a conference of some hours with Alozzi, he suddenly took a resolution to depart the next day; Alozzi was returning to Naples, and they were to embark together.

This resolution he seemed to have adopted in consequence of having reflected, that, if he did not soon go, he might not return time enough for the hour so dreaded, yet so desired, when Rosalie might give birth to another being only less dear to him than herself. This was to be expected now within two months. To be absent at such a time was infinitely more formidable to his imagination than leaving her now; and, as if this had never occurred to him before, he now resolutely determined to tear himself away.

Rosalie saw him depart with anguish of heart, which she endeavoured to stifle, that what he felt might not be increased; but when Alozzi had carried him off, almost by force, so dreadful did it seem to him to say adieu!—she was so much affected, that she could not remain at the window till they were out of sight; but, shutting herself in her own apartment, she gave herself up to tears.

The remonstrances, however, of her Italian woman, who was already much attached to her, and the care which under such circumstances she owed to her own health, even for his sake, whose absence she lamented, roused her at length from this indulgence of useless regret. She now sought to amuse her mind by contemplating anew the scenes around her; but their charms were in a great measure lost. Montalbert was no longer with her to point out the beauties that every where surrounded their abode, or to enjoy them with her. There was an awful sublimity in the great outline of Etna; its deep forests, and
magnificent

magnificent features, which afforded a kind of melancholy pleasure. Not in a situation to explore the scenes it offered more minutely, yet feeling infinite curiosity, she endeavoured to amuse her mind with the prospect of future days, Montalbert would return to her; she should be blessed in beholding his tenderness for his child; she should again listen to his animated description of a country replete with wonders, or be able, perhaps, to visit it with him. In the mean time she determined to pass the heavy, heavy hours in cultivating the talents he loved. She took up her pencils, and, strolling into the garden, placed herself on the seat where, as they often sat together, he had pointed out to her some points of view which were particularly favourable to the painter; she would have sketched them, but her efforts were faint and uncertain. In spite of all her exertions, dark presentiments of future evil hung upon her spirits. Their depression

ſhe imputed to her perſonal ſufferings; the period, to which it was ſo natural for her to look forward with dread, was now near. She had heard, indeed, that in the climate of Sicily infinitely leſs was to be apprehended than in England; but this ſhe only knew from the report of perſons who might ſay it to appeaſe her fears and reaſſure her ſpirits. Perhaps it was her deſtiny to be ſnatched from Montalbert, to releaſe him from his embarraſſment, and to make room for the Roman lady, to whom his mother was ſo deſirous of uniting him.—While theſe thoughts paſſed through her mind, in gloomy ſucceſſion, ſhe repeated, from the little, ſimple ballad of Gay——

“ Thou’lt meet an happier maiden,

“ But none that loves thee ſo ! ”

At length, however ſlowly, the tedious hours wore away. Montalbert returned; he returned apparently more enamoured
than

than before this absence of nine weeks, and Rosalie forgot that she had ever been unhappy.

When, the first joy of their meeting being a little subdued, Rosalie spoke to her husband of his mother, she fancied that though he declined conversation on the subject, that he was in reality less anxious about the future consequences of his marriage than she had ever yet seen him. When he could not wholly evade speaking on the subject, he affected an indifference, which made Rosalie believe he was himself at ease; for, little skilled herself in dissimulation, she did not for a moment imagine that this tranquillity was artificial.

At length the hour arrived when real joy succeeded to this external calm. Rosalie brought into the world a lovely boy, and her own health was so soon re-established, that, in a very few weeks, her beauty appeared more brilliant than before her confinement. More attached to her than ever, Montalbert could hardly bear

bear to have her a moment out of his fight; yet the time was come, when, if he followed the dictates of that prudence to which he had already made so many sacrifices, he must return to Naples.

Alozzi, whose friendship for him appeared to be undiminished, failed not to remind Montalbert of the necessity of this return; but his remonstrances, however reasonable and gentle, were always received with uneasiness, and sometimes with impatience and ill-humour. The visits of Alozzi had not been more frequent than formerly; on the contrary, he had been more rarely their visitor than during his former stay at Messina; though he returned thither before Montalbert, he never appeared at the residence of Rosalie till his friend arrived there. Notwithstanding these precautions, however, the fault of Montalbert's temper found food to nourish itself in the looks of Alozzi, whom he fancied regarded Rosalie with too much admiration, and sometimes fixed on her eyes in which passion and hope
were

were too evidently expressed. This idea having once seized the imagination of Montalbert, became a source of inexpressible torment, and when he reflected, that he must soon leave his wife in the house of this friend, who was, he persuaded himself, in love with her, neither her virtues, nor her attachment to him, neither the honour of his friend, nor the confidence he ought to have had in Rofalie, were sufficient to quiet his apprehensions, though he felt them to be alike injurious to his own peace, and to that of those whom he most loved.

Sometimes he gazed on Rofalie as she sat with his boy sleeping in her arms, and tried to persuade himself, that if once his mother could see these interesting creatures, she would not only pardon him, but receive them to her protection and tendernefs. Then, recollecting what had passed during his last visit to this violent and impracticable parent, he felt that all such hopes were delusive: he became ashamed of what often appeared to him

an unpardonable meanness, and resolved, at whatever pecuniary risk, to throw off a yoke which degraded him in his own eyes; to produce his wife and his child, and abide the consequences of his mother's displeasure.

While Montalbert was thus deliberating, and every hour forming and abandoning projects for the future, a letter he received from Naples, compelled him to adopt the measure of immediately going thither. It was from a female relation, who usually resided with his mother; and who now informed him, that she was extremely ill, and it was absolutely necessary for him to see her as immediately as possible.

Wretched is the policy which too often puts at variance the best feelings of human nature; which sets the parent against the child, because expences either affect his ease, or are painful to his avarice; which estrange the brother from the sister, and make enemies of the amiable and lovely group, who, but a few, a very few years before, were happy associates in the innocent,

nocent, thoughtless hours of childhood.— Ah! wretched is the policy which makes the son, too, often rejoice, when she who bore him and nourished him mingles with the dust; when those eyes are closed which have so often been filled with tears of tender anxiety as they gazed on him!— and yet all the contrivances, which cunning and caution have invented for the security of property, have a direct tendency to occasion all this, while mistaken views of happiness, unfortunate mistakes in the head, or deficiency of feeling in the heart, do the rest, and occasion more than half the miseries of life.

Montalbert, on receiving the letter that gave him notice of his mother's danger, felt, for a moment, that he was her son; but almost as soon this sense of filial duty and affection was lost in an involuntary recollection of the release which her death would give him from the pain of concealing a clandestine marriage, or reducing himself and his posterity to indigence if he betrayed it.

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He had no sooner felt this sentiment arise in his mind than he was shocked at and resisted it ; but again it arose, and he found all his affection for his mother weak, when opposed to the idea of the advantages he might derive from her quitting the world where she alone was the barrier between him and happiness with the woman he adored.

It was not, however, a time to investigate these sentiments deeply, but to act in pursuance of the letter. He hastened, therefore, to inform his wife of its contents, who agreed with him entirely as to the urgency of his immediate departure, yet wept and hung about him as if impressed with some unusual apprehension of future sorrow ; and, as she kissed her child, she almost drowned it with her tears.

Montalbert, who felt none of this violent grief at an absence, the duration of which would, as he thought, depend on himself, consoled her with views of future prosperity and uninterrupted happiness.

Alozzi

Alozzi had a few days before left Messina, and was gone to Agrigentum, where he intended to remain some time. Montalbert, therefore, who had no doubt but that he should return within five or six weeks, felt no uneasiness at the thoughts of leaving to frequent interviews with his wife, in his absence, a man whom all his reason did not enable him to see with her, in his presence, without pain.

The letter Montalbert had received was written in such pressing terms, that there was no time to be lost, and he determined to begin his journey on the next day.

Rosalie, far from feeling even the usual tranquillity, saw the moment of his bidding her adieu arrive with agonies of sorrow, for which she knew not how to account—yet could not stifle or command. Nothing new had occurred in her situation to make this absence more dreadful than the two preceding ones; indeed it should have been otherwise, for the presence

fence of her infant, on which she doated with all the fondness of a first maternal affection, was what was most likely to console her in this temporary parting from its father: nor had she to say, with the unhappy Dido——

“ Si quis mihi parvulus aula
 “ Luderet Æneas, qui te tantem ore referret ;
 “ Non equidam omnino capta aut deserta viderer.”

VIRGIL'S ÆNEID.

The servants about her were the same as those with whom she had formerly reason to be satisfied. The situation around her offered all that the most lovely scenes of nature could do to assuage the pain inflicted by her husband's involuntary and short absence. All this she urged to appease the tumult of her spirits; she owned the justice of it all, but nothing gave her any consolation, and, when she at last allowed him to tear himself away, the resolution to see him depart was acquired by
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an effort so painful, that he was hardly out of sight before her senses forsook her, and it was many hours before the remonstrances of Zulietta, her Italian maid, and of an older woman who assisted in the care of her infant boy, so far roused her from the despondence into which she fell, as to engage her to attend to the care of her own health, on which depended that of the child she nourished at her breast.

By degrees, however, she became more composed ; she received cheerful letters from Montalbert, sent by a vessel which passed them at sea. It mentioned, that they were becalmed, but that he was perfectly well, and had no doubt of writing to her the next day from Naples. Ashamed of fears and of despondence, which seemed, as soon as she could reason upon it, to have so little foundation, she returned once more to the amusements which used to beguile the hours of her husband's absence, and all that were not dedicated to the care
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of her child, whom she attended to herself, she passed in cultivating those talents which Montalbert loved, and in which he had assisted and marked her progress with such exquisite delight.

CHAP. XXI.

IN Sicily there is no winter such as is felt in more northern countries, and now, in the month of February, spring every where appeared in the rich vales that stretch towards the sea from the base of Etna. His towering and majestic summit alone presented the image of eternal frost, and formed a singular but magnificent contrast to the vivid and luxuriant vegetation of the lower world.

Having only Italian or Sicilian servants about her, her former knowledge of the language was so much improved, that Rosalie now spoke Italian with ease, and read it with as much pleasure as English ; but, since Montalbert had been gone this time, she felt the want of new English books ; she read over the few she had
with

with her, repeated frequently some pieces of poetry she was fond of, and sometimes longing to hear the sound of an English voice, and fancying, that if Montalbert's absence was lengthened, she should forget her native tongue, or pronounce it like a foreigner. From this train of thought her mind was naturally carried to England, and when she reflected how entirely she was secluded from all knowledge of what passed there, she felt her tenderness and solicitude return for Mrs. Vyvian, and would have given half a world, had she possessed it, to have known how that beloved parent bore her absence, and what was the state of her health. Even the passionate fondness she felt for her child most forcibly recalled that affection which she owed her mother. . . . " Just so, (said she, as she studied with delight, in the features of her little boy, the resemblance of Montalbert), just so, perhaps, my poor mother, as soon as she dared indulge herself with a sight of me, endeavoured to make out, in my unfortunate lineaments, the

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the likeness of my unhappy father—that unfortunate Ormsby, whose uncertain fate has thrown over her days the heavy gloom of anxious despondence, more difficult, perhaps, to bear than despair itself. . . . Dear, unhappy parents!—never shall your daughter see either of you perhaps again—never shall she know the blessing of being acknowledged by a father; of being pressed to the conscious heart of a mother proud to own her! ”

A flood of tears followed this soliloquy; but she remembered for how many misfortunes such a husband as Montalbert ought to console her, and tried, though in vain, to call in a train of more cheerful ideas. The gloom, however, which hung over her mind, and for which she could not herself account, was neither to be reasoned with, nor dissipated entirely; and having neither books nor conversation to beguile the time, her spirits became more and more depressed. A thousand vague apprehensions beset her for the health of

her child; she now never quitted him a moment, and watched him incessantly with a vigilance which fed itself with imaginary terrors.

This state of mind had continued some time, with no other relief than what the hope of Montalbert's speedy return afforded, when, sitting in a lower apartment with her infant in her arms, Rosalie was surpris'd by a singular motion in the floor, which seem'd to rise under her feet; she started up, and saw, with horror and amazement, the walls of the room breaking in several directions, while the dust and lime threaten'd to choke her, and so obscured the air, that she could hardly distinguish Zulietta, who ran from another room, and seizing her by the hand, drew her with all the strength she could exert through a door which opened under an arch into the garden. Zulietta spoke not; she was, indeed, unable to speak.

Rosalie, to whom the tremendous idea of an earthquake now occurred, followed

as quickly as she was able, clasping her boy to her breast*. They were soon about fifty yards from the house, the ground heaving and rolling beneath them like the waves of the sea, and beyond them breaking into yawning gulphs, which threatened to prevent their flight; Rosalie then looked round, and saw, instead of the house she had just left, a cloud of impenetrable smoke, which prevented her knowing whether any of it remained above the convulsed earth that had entirely swallowed part of the shattered walls. No language could describe the terror and confusion that overwhelmed this little group of fugitives; for no other fearful spectacle can impress on the human mind ideas of such complicated horrors as now

* When the ruins came to be cleared away, says Sir William Hamilton, the bodies of the men who had perished were universally found in the attitude of resistance; the women in that of prayer, unless it was those who had children with them, in which case they were observed to have taken such postures as were likely to shelter and protect them.

surrounded them. They heard the crash of the building they had just left, as it half sunk into a deep chasm; before them, and even under their feet, the ground continued to break; the trees were torn from their roots, and falling in every direction around them; and vapours of sulphur and burning bitumen seemed to rise in pestilential clouds, which impeded the sight and the respiration.

Rosalie called faintly, and with a sickening heart, as conscious of its inutility, on the name of Montalbert. Alas! Montalbert was afar off, and could not succour her. To the mercy of Heaven, who seemed thus to summon her and her infant away, she committed him and herself; and laying herself on the ground, with her child in her arms, and Zuletta kneeling by her, she resigned herself to that fate which appeared to be inevitable.

Flight was vain—all human help was vain, but nature still resisted dissolution, and she could not help thinking with agony of the state of Montalbert's mind,
when

when the loss of his wife and child should be known to him. Another thought darted into her mind, and brought with it a more severe pang than any she had yet felt: Montalbert proposed about this time to return; within a few days she had begun to expect him, in consequence of his last letters. It was possible—alas! it was even probable, that he was already at Messina, and he too might have perished: he might at this moment expire amid the suffocating ruins—crushed by their weight, or stifled by subterraneous fires. The image was too horrible; she started up, as if it were possible for her feeble arms to save him; she looked wildly round her—all was ruin and desolation, but the earth no longer trembled as it had done, and a faint hope of safety arose almost insensibly in her heart. She spoke to Zuliatta, who seemed petrified and motionless; she conjured her to rise and assist her—yet whither to go she knew not, nor what were her intentions, or her prospects of safety.

While Rosalie yet spoke incoherently, almost unconscious that she spoke at all, a second shock, though less violent than the first, again deprived her of the little presence of mind she had collected—and, again prostrate on the ground, she commended her soul to Heaven !

In a few moments, however, this new convulsion ceased, and the possibility that Montalbert might be returning, might be seeking her in distracted apprehension, restored to her the power of exertion. The hope that she might once see her husband, served as a persuasion that she should see, and she advanced heedless of any danger she might incur by it towards the ruins of the house, where it was probable he would seek for her ; but between her and those ruins was a deep and impassable chasm, which had been formed during the last shock.

Zulietta, from her abrupt and wild manner, had conceived an idea that her mistress meant, in the despair occasioned by terror and grief, to throw herself into
this

this gulph. Impressed with this fear, she seized her by the arm, and making use of such arguments as the moment allowed, she drew her away, and they walked together, as hastily as they had strength, through the garden and up a rising ground beyond it, which was terminated by a deep wood, which had been less affected than the lower ground, though one or two of the trees were fallen and some half uprooted. Unable to go farther, Rosalie sat down on one of their trunks, and Zuliatta placed herself near her.

Evening was coming on, but the deep gloom that hung over every object made the time of day imperceptible. Almost doubting of her existence, Rosalie seemed insensible to every thing till the feeble cry of her infant boy, missing its accustomed nourishment at her breast, awakened the terrible apprehension of seeing him perish before her eyes for want of that nourishment.

“ Zuliatta, (said she, in a mournful and broken voice)—Zuliatta! what will be-

come of my child?"—"Ah! what will become of us all?—(answered the half-senseless girl).—O Dio! we shall die here, or we shall be murdered by the men who frequent these woods."

"Could I but save my child! (exclaimed Rosalie, little encouraged by her companion).—Could I but know whether Montalbert lives!—O Montalbert! where are you—if you exist?" - - - -

A shriek from Zulietta interrupted this soliloquy. She started from the tree where they sat, and fled to some distance; Rosalie involuntarily followed her, looking back towards the dark wood. "I saw some person move among the trees, (cried Zulietta, in answer to her lady's eager inquiries), I am sure I did—banditti are coming to murder us."

"And were that all I had to dread, (said Rosalie, collecting some portion of resolution)—were that all I had to dread, how gladly would I give up my life and that of this infant. But recollect yourself, Zulietta; who should at this time pursue us?—"

us?—I have heard -----
 (she paused, for her memory was confused and distracted)—I have heard, that it is among the ruins of houses that, at such times as this, the robber and the affassin throw themselves. . . . Oh! would we could find any nourishment; but where to look for it—I cannot see my baby die, Zuletta—ah! what are any fears I may have for myself, compared to those I feel for him!—In the woods, perhaps, we might find some fallen fruits.”—Zuletta was not a mother, and the apprehensions of these banditti had taken such strong possession of her startled and dissipated senses, that every noise she either heard or fancied, she imagined to be their steps among the woods; and the reddening light of the declining day, as it faintly glimmered among the trees, was supposed to be their fires at a distance in the forest.

Had Rosalie, however, been accompanied by a person who had more fortitude, there would have been less occasion for

her to exert that resolution which her superior good sense gave her, and which was now absolutely necessary for the preservation of them all. A moment's steady reflection lent her courage to attempt at least appeasing the groundless fears of Zulietta—enough of real apprehension, alas! remained.

It was not, however, without great difficulty, that she could prevail on her servant to follow her, not into the wood, for that she peremptorily refused, but round one of its extremities to a small eminence which Rosalie thought must command a view of Messina; at least it was not far from this spot, as she now remembered, that she had once been shewn a prospect of the town by Montalbert. They exerted all their strength, and slowly gained a still higher ground, which commanded an extensive view of the city, the surrounding country, and the sea. The country remained, but not at all resembling what it had been only a few hours before ;

before; the sea too was visible, though heavy and dark clouds hung over it, and it seemed mingled with the threatening atmosphere above it; but Messina was distinguished only by more dismal vapours, and by the red gleam of fires that were consuming the fallen buildings.—Rosalie listened if, from among the desolate ruins, she could hear the wailings of the ruined!—but silence and death seemed to have enwrapt this miserable scene in their blackest veil, and such an image of horror presented itself to her mind, as that which since inspired the sublime and fearful description of the destruction of the army of Cambyfes in the desert, ending thus——

“ Then ceas’d the storm.—Night bow’d his Ethiop brow
 “ To earth, and listen’d to the groans below
 “ Grim horror shook :—a while the living hill
 “ Heav’d with convulsive throws—and all was still.”

DR. DARWIN’S ŒCONOMY OF VEGETATION.

Maternal love, the strongest passion that the female heart can feel, still sustained the timid and delicate Rosalie amidst the real miseries of which she was herself conscious, and those which the disturbed and agitated spirits of Zulietta represented.—She must struggle to sustain herself, or what would become of her child? Could she not bear any immediate evils better than the dreadful idea of leaving this lovely, helpless creature to the mercy of the elements?—Tears, hitherto denied to her, filled her eyes as she carried her mind forward to all the possibilities to which this fearful image led her; she found relief in weeping, and once more acquired voice and courage to ask Zulietta what it would be best for them to do?—Some time passed before Zulietta was capable of giving a rational answer; at length, however, they agreed, that it would be better, before it became entirely dark, to endeavour to find some house where they might be received for the night—

night—" for surely (said Rosalie) some must remain, wide as the desolation has been."

In this hope, Rosalie and her attendant moved on as well as their strength permitted them ; but it was by this time nearly dark, and round the skirts of the wood it became very difficult for them to discern their way.

Languid and desponding, Zulietta some times declared she could go no farther, and the spirits of her unhappy mistress were exhausted in vain to reanimate her courage.

A path, which they thought might lead to some habitation, had insensibly bewildered them among the trees, and the darkness, which now totally surrounded them, again raised new terrors in the mind of Zulietta, who, clinging to Rosalie, insisted upon it that she heard the footsteps of persons following them: they listened—a dreary silence ensued; but presently Rosalie was convinced that at least this time the fears of her woman were but too well

well grounded ; the voices of two men talking together were distinctly heard, and, on turning round, they saw a light glimmer among the trees. As these persons, whoever they were, followed the path they had taken, and were advancing quickly towards them, escape or concealment became impossible ; half dead with fear, and almost unconscious of what she did, Rosalie now stopped, determined to await the event.

The men approached, and, as soon as the light they held made the figures before them visible, one of them uttered an exclamation of surprize, and eagerly advanced towards Rosalie—it was Count Alozzi, who, with one of his servants, had come in search of her. Without, however, staying to tell her what circumstances had brought him thus from Agrigentum, or how he knew that she had escaped with her child from the destruction that had overwhelmed the house, he entreated her to suffer him to conduct
her

her to a place of security, which he hoped, he said, to find not far off.

The dread of perishing with her child in the woods being thus suddenly removed from her mind, hope and gratitude as rapidly succeeded.—Ah! what so comfortable to the weary wanderer, even in the common paths of life, as the soothing voice of a friend!—and such Alozzi now appeared to Rosalie. As she suffered him to lead her on, his servant preceding them with the light, she eagerly questioned him, if he knew any thing of Montalbert?—Whether it was possible that he might be arrived at Messina?—and then, trying to persuade herself he was safe, she went on to compare the probabilities there were that he had not suffered, but was either at Naples, or at sea on his passage. These inquiries Alozzi answered with great coldness: he told her, (which was true), that he had not been at Messina; that of Montalbert it was impossible any thing could yet be known,
and

and that all they could do was to wait with patience for the next day, when, if they were not visited again by a new shock, the survivors might be able to know the extent of their loss.

The mournful manner in which Alozzi uttered this, gave to Rosalie the most poignant alarm. Without reflecting how natural it was for him to speak thus, if only the general misfortune of the country was considered, of which he bore himself a share proportioned to his property, she immediately figured to herself that he knew something of Montalbert, and was willing by delay to prepare her for the intelligence he had to give her. She had not, however, power to repeat her questions ; but a melancholy silence was observed on all sides till they reached a house, which, with two or three others, were situated among olive grounds, and which, Alozzi said, belonged to his estate. These buildings had received but little injury, yet the inhabitants of them, still
doubting

doubting whether they might remain under their roofs, were so terrified and dejected by what had passed, and the dread of that which was to come, that the presence of Alozzi seemed to make no impression upon them. They coldly and silently acquiesced in affording the accommodation he asked, for the lady he brought with him, and set before the party such food as they happened to have. Zuletta, recovering some degree of courage, pressed Rosalie to eat, and Alozzi watched her with eager and anxious solicitude, which, when she observed, she imputed to his solicitude, or sorrow for the fate of his friend, which she still fancied he knew.

Fatigue, however, both of mind and body, and the care necessary to herself for the sake of her child, overcame for a while her excessive anxiety for Montalbert, of whom Alozzi again and again repeated he knew nothing ; at length Rosalie consented to retire with Zuletta to a bed, or rather mattress, which the wife
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of one of the tenants of Alozzi prepared for her, where her child appearing to be in health and in present safety, sleep lent a while its friendly assistance to relieve her spirits, and recruit her strength, after such sufferings and such scenes as those of the preceding day.

Her repose was broken and disturbed, for she fancied she heard Montalbert call her, and that the buildings were about to crush her and her infant. In the morning, however, she was refreshed and relieved, even by this partial and interrupted forgetfulness, and able to receive the visit of the Count, who waited on her with inquiries after her health, and to consult with her what she should do. To this last question she was entirely ignorant what to answer, and could only, instead of a reply, put to him other questions; what he believed Montalbert would have directed, had he been present? and what he himself advised.—“ It is impossible (said he gravely) to tell what Montalbert would

would have done, were he here ; but, for myself, I own it appears to me that there is only one part to take. It is but too probable that another flock will be felt before many days are over. Here I have no longer a house to receive me, for that I inhabited at Messina is, I know, destroyed, though I was not near it yesterday when the earthquake happened, but about a mile from the town on my way home. The villa, which you did me the honour to inhabit, has shared the same fate. I approached it; I saw part of it buried in the earth, and the rest is by this time probably reduced to ashes. What then can I do but quit this devoted country, and return to Naples?—There I have a home, I have friends.—If you, Madam, will put yourself under my protection, I will defend you with my life, and consider myself highly honoured by so precious a charge.”

“ To go to Naples ! (cried Rosalie, interrupting him);—Ah, Count ! Do you recollect how many reasons I have for wishing

wishing to avoid Naples?—And is it this, do you think, Montalbert would conduct me, were he now here?”

“ Alas! (replied Alozzi), it is impossible to say whether those reasons exist which would formerly have influenced him. His mother may no longer be there, or, if she be, it is more than possible that pride and pique may be lost in general calamity, and that at such a time.”

“ You think then, (said Rosalie, eagerly interrupting him), I am sure you think that her son, that Montalbert, is lost—or what other calamity would reach her? ”

“ You exhaust your spirits in vain, my dear Madam, (replied Alozzi); to yield to vague fears can avail nothing. If any evil has befallen my friend, your destroying yourself cannot reach him—if he lives, as he probably does, you owe it to him to preserve yourself and his son.”

“ Oh! how coolly you talk! (exclaimed Rosalie, falling into an agony of grief). I see now that it is indeed easy

to bear the misfortunes of others with calmness."

Alozzi, finding that argument only served to irritate her uneasiness, desisted, and took the wiser resolution of returning to his house, to see if any thing useful to his late guests could yet be saved ; which, though improbable, was not impossible. He communicated his intentions to Zuliotta, who, with the true chambermaid's eagerness to find her few fineries, immediately asked leave to accompany him. Her terrors were now dissipated, or greatly weakened, for she was not of a disposition to be very solicitous about others, and thought herself not only in present security, but in the way of returning to Naples, which she had long been very desirous of doing. She tripped away, therefore, 'with the Count and his servant, leaving her mistress at the house where they had slept, and whither Alozzi proposed to return in a few hours.

When they were gone Rosalie went out with her baby in her arms, and feat-
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ed herself on an open piece of ground, about a hundred yards from the house, which commanded from between the stems of a few straggling olive trees an extensive view of the city of Messina and the country round it. It presented a strange contrast of beauty and destruction. Those parts of the country that had not been convulsed or inverted were adorned with the blossoms of the almond, waving over fields of various coloured lupines and lentiscus; hedges of myrtles divided the enclosures, and among them the pomegranate was coming into flower; the stock doves in innumerable flocks were returning to feed among them, or fluttering amidst the purple and white blossoms of the caper trees: but within half a mile of this profusion of what is most soothing to the imagination, black and hideous gulphs, from whence pestilential vapours seemed to issue, defaced the lovely landscape. The beautiful town of Messina seemed more than half destroyed, and now Rosalie saw not far from her many groups
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of sufferers, who, frantic from the loss of their friends, their children, or their substance, were wandering about the fields without any hope but of passing the next night as they had done part of the preceding one, under the canopy of Heaven, gazing with tearless eyes on the melancholy spot where all their hopes were buried. From the sight of misery, which she could not relieve, her sick heart recoiled; she walked slowly back to the house, and attempted but in vain to form some resolution as to her future plans; but such was her situation, and so entirely did she feel herself dependent on the Count, that this was hardly possible. Again, in a convulsive sigh, she repeated the name of Montalbert—again implored the mercy of Heaven for him and her child, on whose little face, as it was pressed to her bosom, her tears fell in showers!

She turned her fearful eyes on the people among whom she was left. Many were now in the house whom she had
not

not seen before, and some among them gave her but too forcibly the idea of those banditti, of whom Zuletta had expressed so many fears the evening before as they passed through the woods. Some of them were men of large stature, in a kind of uniform, and she fancied that they passed through the room where she was on purpose to observe her. A new species of terror assailed her in consequence of this remark, yet she endeavoured to reason herself out of it, and to suppose that where Count Alozzi had left her she must be in security.

The people, who appeared to belong to the house, brought her some slender meal, which she eat mechanically, and would then have questioned them as to the probability of the Count's return, and the distance to his late residence; but they appeared averse to any conversation, and she thought looked as if they wished her away, but of their real motives she had not the remotest idea.

Hours

Hours passed away, and neither Alozzi nor Zulieta appeared. Many new faces entered the house, and she understood, from such conversation as she heard and put together, that they were come to obtain an asylum for the night. One of them was a lovely Sicilian girl, of sixteen or seventeen, who wept grievously, as Rosalie comprehended, for the loss of her sister and her sister's children. The beauty of the little Montalbert, as he lay sleeping in his mother's arms, seemed to interest and affect this young person; she spoke to Rosalie, and was approaching to caress the child, when an old woman who was with her said something in a sharp and severe accent, and drew her hastily out of the room.

This circumstance, and indeed every remark she now made, increased the impatience and uneasiness with which she waited for the return of Alozzi. Night was at hand; the parties in the house were contriving how to pass it most at their ease, but nobody seemed to attend to

her; on the contrary, she believed that a disposition to shun her was evident in the women, while the looks of the men gave her infinitely more alarm, and she sometimes resolved, rather than pass the night among them, to set out alone, and seek the protection of Alozzi.

On this then she had almost determined, and, trembling and faint, left the house with an intention of discovering how far such an attempt might be safer than to remain where she was. She had proceeded only about a hundred yards, when a new convulsion of the earth threw her down, and her senses entirely forsook her; nor did she recover her recollection till she found herself on board a small vessel at sea, her child lying by her, and a woman, whom she had never seen before, watching her. As soon as she appeared to be sensible Alozzi came to her, endeavouring to sooth and console her. He told her, that another shock of an earthquake had compelled all who could leave Sicily to depart; that he had before engaged

engaged a bark ; that they were now far on their way to Naples with a fair wind, and that they should be there in a few hours.

The shock she had received, the terror and confusion with which she was yet impressed, were such as left Rosalie little sensation but that ever predominant one of love and anxiety for her infant boy, whom she clasped with more fondness than ever to her breast, and, amidst the terrors that on every side surrounded her, found in his preservation something for which to be grateful to Heaven.

CH A P. XXII.

WHEN the vessel, freighted with these wretched victims of calamity, reached the port of Naples, Rosalie was carried on shore with the rest almost insensible. The woman, whom Alozzi had placed about her during the voyage, was extremely careful of her and her child; he appeared to have suffered much less than might have been expected. The anxiety of Rosalie for his safety recalled her to life and recollection, but with these came the cruel remembrance of all she had suffered, and the dread of all she might yet have to encounter: youth, and a good constitution hitherto unbroken by misfortune, were on her side. With her the soothing voice of hope had not yet been silenced by frequent disappointment; a few

few hours of repose, therefore, with the consciousness of present safety, gave her strength of mind to look steadily on the prospect before her, obscured as it was by uncertainty and fear.

A stranger in Naples, and without the means of inquiring of any one but Alozzi, who saw her only for a few moments every day, she continued to torment herself with vague and fruitless conjectures as to the fate of Montalbert, of whom she incessantly spoke to the Count, entreating him to make every inquiry, and, above all, to visit Signora Belcastro, his mother, as the probability of Montalbert's safety could be guessed at only by calculating the time of his departure. To these earnest and continual applications Alozzi at first answered by promising to do as she desired; after three or four days he said, he was informed by the servants that their lady was gone to Rome; that Mr. Montalbert left Naples about ten days before her, but whither he was gone they were ignorant.

This account Rosalie thought Alozzi delivered with a degree of sang-froid very unlike his usual manner, especially when so dear a friend as Montalbert was concerned. It served, therefore, only to irritate her impatience and awaken new fears. She was now entirely dependent on Count Alozzi, and though she was unconscious of that jealousy which had rendered Montalbert uneasy before their last parting, she was sensible that it was extremely improper for a woman of her age to remain under the protection of such a man as Alozzi, who was not related to her, and who had, she knew, the reputation of a libertine. Variety of apprehensions assailed her, from which she knew not how to escape. Though she was ignorant of Montalbert's particular suspicions, she had often remarked with concern that general tendency to jealousy, which was almost the only blemish she had discovered in his character; and it was but too probable, that when they met again, (for the idea of Montalbert's death her heart

heart repelled as soon as it approached), their meeting, and perhaps their future lives, might be embittered by the uneasiness her present situation would create in his mind. Nor was that all. In what a light might she not be represented to his mother, already too much prejudiced against her.

However perplexed by these considerations, Rosalie was under the cruel necessity of keeping them within her own breast; for how could she speak of them to Alozzi?—The woman, who had supplied the place of Zulietta, was not only of an inferior description, but was resolutely silent when questioned on any subject whatever; and all Rosalie could learn of her maid was, that, during the hurry and confusion of their embarkation, Zulietta was among those who had been left on shore, where the waves soon after rose so suddenly that they swept off a multitude of people in their reflux, and it was more than probable this unfortunate girl

was drowned. Of the woman, now her attendant, who was called Maddalena, she was told, that she had lost her husband at Messina, and that he had been Maitre d'Hotel to the Count at his house in that city; Maddalena had fled to the villa, and had arrived just as those were embarking whom the Count admitted into the vessel. This story, however probable, and however confirmed by the account Alozzi himself had given, was told by Maddalena with an air so calm and even cold, that Rosalie could not help doubting of its truth, and thought it impossible, that, had she sustained such a loss, she could have spoken of them with so little emotion.

However that might be, she was perfectly convinced that Alozzi had given this woman orders, which she seemed determined to obey. Day after day passed; on some of them the Count did not appear, on others he sat with her an hour or two, endeavouring to keep up something

thing that might resemble common conversation ; but the moment Rosalie spoke of Montalbert, of her increasing anguish of heart, of the awkwardness of her situation, and of the burden she must necessarily feel herself to him, Alozzi seemed impatient to put an end to his visit, still persisting to say, however, when he could not entirely evade her questions, that he believed in the safety of Montalbert. But there was something in his manner of saying this, that gave Rosalie greater pain than if he had spoken more doubtfully. There seemed to be some mystery for which she could not account, and a carelessness as to the fate of his former friend, which was quite unnatural. Alozzi, it is true, treated her with great respect ; he appeared hurt at the remotest hint of any trouble she might give him, and said fine things as to the delight it afforded him to be of any use to her. These sort of speeches he had not unfrequently made while Montalbert was present and they lived together at the Sicilian villa ; but

now they were made in another manner, and Rosalie shrunk from them with something like terror and disgust.

Anxiety, such as at this time assailed her, could not long be patiently endured. The natural strength of her understanding told her, that to remain under the protection of the Count, and concealed in an obscure lodging at Naples, must in the event be infinitely more prejudicial to her future happiness with Montalbert, if he yet lived, than even the discovery in regard to his mother, which had formerly been the source of so much uneasiness. If Montalbert was lost, how could she think of suffering his son to remain in obscurity, without claiming for him the protection of his father's family, and the fortune, small as it might be, that belonged to him?—This idea gathered strength from hour to hour as she indulged it.—She looked at her son, who visibly improved in health and beauty, and reproached herself for the injury she was doing him by the concealment of a secret, which, perhaps,

perhaps, there might be no danger in revealing ; or, if there was, which could affect only herself.

She considered, that if Montalbert had been a moment in danger, and was restored in safety to his mother, she would hardly at such a time refuse him her pardon. If, on the contrary, his fate was uncertain, if he had failed for Messina before the tremendous catastrophe which had happened there, and was not yet returned, the fears his mother must entertain for his life would surely prevent her driving from her the fatherless child, for whom she should implore her pity and protection ; for herself she had nothing to ask, but to be received as the mother of that child. Almost convinced, by this reasoning, that she ought immediately to throw herself at the feet of Signora Belcastro, she formed plans for proceeding, and even thought that, if they succeeded, Montalbert would be made completely happy by this reconciliation. Fully possessed by this design,

she knew there was no way of executing it without the participation and even the assistance of Alozzi, to whom she took the first opportunity to explain her plans and her reasons for adopting them, desiring Alozzi to make immediate inquiries as to the probability of Signora Belcastro's return to Naples; or, if that was not likely to happen soon, she desired to be put in a way of addressing her properly at Rome.

The Count heard her with unaffected astonishment, and with anger and concern, which he in vain attempted to stifle; he observed, from her manner, that she had long thought of what she now spoke upon. He listened, however, with as much patience as he could command, and then set himself to prove to her the wildness and impossibility of what she proposed; the injury it might be to Montalbert, the risk it would be to herself. He represented Signora Belcastro as the most violent and vindictive of Italian women, and bade

Rosalie

Rosalie consider how she could meet the eye, or endure the reproaches, of such a person? How bear to be treated with contempt and insult, if, as was very probable, Signora Belcastro protested against the legitimacy of the little Montalbert? Or how, on the contrary, support his being torn from her, which, Alozzi protested, she might expect, should the capricious passions of his grandmother take another turn?

Rosalie listened and shuddered, but still persisted in declaring, that if in two days no news arrived of Montalbert, she would adopt this expedient of claiming for his child the protection of his own family, and, conscious that in doing so had done her duty, would leave the event to Heaven.

These two days Alozzi hardly ever left her, nor did he omit any argument to dissuade her from, what he termed, a scheme of the wildest desperation. Some expressions, however, that he let fall in the warmth of this debate, served only
to

to confirm her resolution. She told him very calmly, that many of the reasons he had given against her acting as she proposed seemed to her to be the very reasons why she should pursue her plan; that she should have been very much obliged to him would he have lent her his assistance; but added, with a degree of resolution she had never exerted before, that since he declined it, she knew there were Englishmen at Naples, and she was sure, that when her situation was known, there was not one of them but what would come forward to protect and support her.

A flood of tears followed this temporary exertion of artificial courage, for her forlorn and friendless condition pressed more forcibly than it had ever yet done on her mind; she caught her child to her bosom, and sobbed with a violence of grief which she was no longer able to command.—Alozzi, almost thrown off his guard by the mingled emotions he felt, and alarmed by the mention of her appealing to her

her

her own countrymen, now endeavoured to soothe and appease her. He besought her to give him a little more time to make inquiries after his friend, from people who were every day coming in from Sicily; represented how possible it was that he might yet be seeking her there, and gave so many plausible reasons why she ought to wait a little longer before she took a measure which she might repent when it would be too late, that, at length, he extorted a promise from her to do nothing without his knowledge, and to wait at least another week.

This week, the third of her arrival at Naples, was rapidly passing away. No news of Montalbert arrived, and now Alozzi affected extreme concern whenever he was spoken of, and the tormenting suspense of his unfortunate wife became almost insupportable. Her former plan was again thought of: if it was followed by none of the advantages she hoped for, she should at least learn what was by
his

is own family supposed to be the fate of Montalbert, of which it was improbable they should be as ignorant as she was. Even at the moment when she was suffering all the misery of conjecture, it was possible he might be at Naples, as uncertain in regard to her fate as she was of his; and what other means but those she now thought of, had she to discover whether he yet lived?

Among the variety of thoughts that offered themselves as she considered this subject, there was one which she wondered had never occurred to her before. This was, that Charles Vyvian was certainly in Italy, and might very probably be at Naples: what a consolation it would be to see him, even though she dared not reveal how nearly they were related!—she, therefore, busied herself in contriving means to discover the names of the English who were now at Naples; but, upon examining this nearer, she found it knowledge that was very difficult for her

to obtain. Of the people of the house where she lodged she knew nothing ; they had never once appeared in her sight, and her cook was, as Alozzi told her, a Sicilian, who had come over in the same vessel with them, whom he had taken out of pity into his service ; but when Rosalie attempted to speak to him, by way of giving him commissions, she found him to be a fellow who had orders to evade executing them, and perfectly knew his part ; she even fancied she had seen him before, though she could not recollect where or when. As to the woman, she declined doing any thing, and her reasons too were plausible ; she was a stranger at Naples ; she did not even know her way in the streets. How was it possible for her to, do what Signora Rosalia desired ? And how could she go to inquire after English Signors ?—and where ?——

“ Ah, Signora ! (said the artful Italian, venturing now on a liberty she had never taken before)——Ah, Signora ! If you should find those rich and great Signori
 , Inglese,

Inglese, do you think there is among them a finer or a nobler gentleman than Count Alozzi ? ”

Rosalie to this impertinence gave a cold and haughty answer. It sunk, however, deeply into her mind ; but should she resent it as it deserved, she might, perhaps, deprive her child of the cares of this woman, and it was possible another would be less attentive and less experienced : nor had she, indeed, the means of discharging her, or could she consider her as being her servant.

The observations which every hour forced themselves upon her mind, were at length so accumulated and so painful, that some immediate relief became necessary ; but where was it to be found ? Stranger and depressed as she was at her first arrival, she had neither strength nor inclination to go out ; nor had she then a change of clothes to appear in. Alozzi had supplied her with every article of dress in profusion ; but of these she had forborne to take more than was absolutely

lutely necessary, not knowing whether Montalbert could ever repay his friend these pecuniary obligations.

Now, indeed, the weight of them became intolerable, for Rosalie, having once had her fears awakened that the intentions of Alozzi were dishonourable, seized with trembling avidity on every circumstance that confirmed these fears; and, as generally happens in these cases, they went even beyond the truth, and she figured to herself the many imaginary evils: that Signora Belcastro had never been absent from Naples; that her son was even now there, deceived by the artifices of his treacherous friend, and perhaps lamenting as dead the wife and infant who actually existed in the same city—then a train of frightful possibilities followed. Convinced of her death by the report of Alozzi, he might determine to oblige his mother and give his hand to the Roman lady, whom she was so desirous of his marrying. He might then, perhaps, leave
Naples

Naples for the neighbourhood of Rome, she should lose sight of him for ever, and, with her helpless, deserted boy, become a forsaken wanderer upon earth.

With these terrors sleep forsook the pillow of Rosalie, and peace no longer visited her for a moment during the day. The sight of her child, but yesterday a balm to her anxious heart, no longer afforded her unmixed delight; his innocent eyes and unconscious smiles seemed to reproach her for timidity, which, while it was unworthy of herself, might irreparably injure both his father and him.

By these reflections her wavering resolution was at last so confirmed, that she determined to write to the mother of Montalbert; and as she could imagine no other safe or even possible way of conveying it, she determined, when her letter was written, to direct it in the most correct manner she could, and walking into the street give it to the first lazzarone she found; such a person could have no
interest

interest in deceiving her; and as she intended to give him a small reward when she delivered the letter, and promise one more considerable when he had executed her commission, she thought she should at all events obtain information so very material to her, as whether Signora Belcastro was now at her house at Naples.

This plan she executed without difficulty, because, among all the attempts to write that Alozzi had guarded against, that of her giving herself the letter to the first she met of the numerous lazzeroni in the streets of Naples, was what had never occurred to him as possible.

The letter was long and explanatory, and, if not written in the very purest Italian, was infinitely better than many Italian natives could themselves have penned. It contained expressions of the tenderest nature towards Montalbert; of humility and deference for his mother, on whose pity and protection she threw herself, and with whom she pleaded for her
 infant

infant boy with a pathos which few hearts could have resisted.

Having then sealed and directed it, she took her child in her arms, and, her attendant being engaged in another part of the house, walked down into the street; she trembled as she looked around her, and shrunk from the eyes of the few passengers that she saw. Such a person, however, as she had occasion for was soon found. A stout boy of sixteen, half cloathed, eagerly presented himself; Rosalie, in a hurried and faltering voice, gave him his commission and two carlinos*, promising him double that sum if he returned within an hour to the house she had left, which she pointed out to him, and gave her the information she required. The lad promised to do all she directed, and sprang out of sight in an instant. Rosalie, hardly able to support herself, returned to her apart-

* A Carlino is 5d. English.

ments, from which she had not even been missed. The die was now cast. The future happiness or misery of herself and child depended on the answer to this letter: breathless with fear, she awaited the return of her messenger, who came back almost immediately; she flew to the door, the lad told her, that Signora Belcastro was at Naples, and that he had given the packet to one of her servants, who would deliver it to his lady. It was now then certain, that Alozzi had deceived her. Alas! it was certain too, that, in this attempt to emancipate herself from his power, she had been compelled to commit her whole happiness to a woman, whose proud and vindictive character she now thought upon with more terror than ever. It was, however, too late to recede, nor did she wish to do so, but armed herself with the fortitude conscious integrity ought to give, and determined to endure whatever should happen, while no wilful imprudence or impropriety could be imputed to her.

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Her own words will now be used to describe how far she was enabled to act as she proposed ; when doubting of the existence of him to whom her letters were addressed, she yet found relief in relating her sufferings, and in keeping a register of the melancholy moments as they passed.

CHAP. XXIII.

A Letter from ROSALIE to MONTALBERT.

“ **W**HEN consciousness of existence returns only to bring with it the consciousness of misery—can I feel any satisfaction in recollection?—Yet I might have been more wretched—I might have been driven quite to distraction; for my little angel Harry might have been torn from me—but he is still with me, still the innocent, unconscious companion of his mother’s sufferings!

“ Where art thou, Montalbert?—Alas! if thou hadst really been lost at Messina, as that treacherous Alozzi insinuated, would it be worth the pains that are now taken to persecute thy unhappy wife; to arraign the legality of thy son’s birth?—

Ah! no, Montalbert!—thy cruel mother would then have left me to my ignominious fate, or, if common humanity had touched the heart of Signora Belcastro with pity for an unprotected stranger, she would have sent me and my child to England, where we could never have offended her more. But, Montalbert, the husband and the father lives, and his inhuman parent knows, that in whatever country we are, his unwearied love will discover us, unless we are hidden in some hideous prison like this. Barbarous Belcastro, it is thus that your cruelty defeats itself!—for amidst these dreary scenes this reflection supports and consoles me.—I dwell upon it incessantly—I convince myself that Montalbert lives—I press his little Harry to my heavy heart, and feel it less agonized as I determine to attempt to live for them both.

“ In the confidence that you, Montalbert, live for me, I tried, when I first recovered myself from terrors that almost deprived me of my reason, to give you
some

some account of the letter I wrote at Naples to your mother, which was undoubtedly the cause of all that has since befallen me. It is now before me, incoherent and half-blotted with my tears; but it describes what I felt, and I will not alter it. It ends at the point of time when I was persuaded I should have an answer, and when my sanguine hopes flattered me that it would be favourable.

“ I looked at our boy, and thought that, if once your mother saw him, his beauty, and his strong resemblance to you, would secure her kindness. I knew that I should tremble and falter; but yet I believed I could acquire courage enough to put him into her arms, with a few words which I meditated to speak. I persuaded myself, that infant loveliness and the voice of nature would do the rest. But the hours passed away, and no summons came for us, as I had fondly expected. I concluded that I should hear the next morning, and I endeavoured to compose myself for the night.

“ It passed, however, in restlessness and anxiety ; but day came, and with it my spirits regained some degree of tranquillity. I dressed my baby with more care than I had done the preceding day, and again sat down to hopes, fears, and conjectures — the hours wore away as on ordinary days, and I received neither letter nor message. The Count Alozzi* paid me his daily visit, but it was shorter than usual, and he either did not observe, or at least did not speak to me of that anxiety, which, I thought, my looks and manner must have betrayed.

“ Night came, and I now concluded that either Signora Belcastro would not condescend to notice me at all, or that her deliberating so long was a favourable circumstance ; for, had she hastily and arrogantly determined to crush my hopes

* In her account of the reasons why she determined to write to his mother, Rosalie omitted those that related to Alozzi ; she thought enough still remained to justify her taking such a step.

for ever, it was most probable, that, a temper so irritable and violent as hers, she would have done it at once, and with as much rage as her contempt would suffer her to shew.

“ In this persuasion then, which was calculated to calm my spirits as much as under such circumstances they would admit of being calmed, I again laid myself down by the side of my sleeping boy, and, notwithstanding the anxiety of my thoughts, fatigue overcame me, and I was lost in a dream that brought you, Montalbert, to my view. . . . I imagined, that, reconciled to your mother, and in possession of all our wishes, I was recounting to you the sad scenes which I had witnessed at Mesfina, when, suddenly awakened by a noise in my room, I saw a man, holding a small lantern, approach my bed, followed by one or two others. I shrieked with terror, and inquired, as well as I could, what they would have—and who they were?—One of them came near me, and, in a

deep and solemn voice, told me that I must rise, dress myself, and follow them. I asked, why? and whither I was to go?—I implored their mercy—I earnestly entreated they would tell who had sent them, and on what pretence I was thus to be dragged from my bed?—To these questions, the men told me, they neither could nor would answer; and one of them, more savage than the rest, approached to take my child, telling me, that he supposed, if he took little master, I should be pleased to follow. This cruel menace drove me to madness. I snatched my child to my bosom, protesting that I would die before he should be forced from me; but that, if I must follow them, and they would only send my woman to me, and retire while I put on my clothes, that I would endeavour to obey.

“As to a woman, they told me, none could be allowed me; that I must quit that house immediately; and that, if I would hasten, they would wait at the door
till

till I was ready with the child. This last word gave me some degree of courage, for the dread of losing my boy had been more terrible than all the rest. I promised every thing required of me, and asked if I might not take some clothes? for I now concluded I was going to prison. They answered, that I might take what I would; but that I must be expeditious, and that silence would avail me more than remonstrance or complaint.

“ The men then left the room, and I tried to acquire steadiness enough to dress myself. My infant needed little but a mantle in which I wrapped him, and our clothes were in two small trunks that stood near my bed. I had, therefore, nothing to pack, and was soon ready; but, expeditious as I had been, my conductors were become impatient, and I had hardly hurried on my things, and wrapped a large cloke round us both, before they entered, and, by the light of the same lantern, conducted me down the stairs, on which stood two or three other

men; an equal number were in the passage, and two others, who stood at the door like sentinels, opened it, where I saw a coach, into which they lifted me; the man who seemed to have the most authority seated himself opposite to me, and it drove away.

“ The night was extremely dark, yet I could not, even had it been otherwise, have formed the least idea whither they were carrying me. What a situation was mine!—Alone at such a time of night, with men whom I could consider no otherwise than as the banditti and assassins of whom I had often read in Italian stories. The strangeness and alarm of such a state alone enabled me to endure it, for I seemed petrified, and had no power to complain or to shed a tear. The man who was with me spoke not, and when I attempted to make any inquiries, which I once or twice collected enough courage to do, he gravely, but not uncivilly, told me, he could not answer them, and that it was merely fatiguing my spirits to ask any questions

questions whatever. I know not how far we had travelled, when the coach stopped at a house where I was taken out by the attendants, who seemed as numerous as before, led into a dreary room, which I thought belonged to an inn, and left to myself for a few moments. Some refreshment was then brought, and the man who had attended me in the coach came in at the same time, and seated himself at the table: he bade me eat, and I obeyed him on account of my infant; he eat heartily himself, yet spoke very little, and wore his hat pulled over his face, which, by the glimmering light of a lamp that hung in the room, appeared, I thought, to be the face of an assassin, and not young in his profession; for the man was between fifty and sixty, tall, bony, and hard-featured, with hollow eyes and large eyebrows, under which he seemed sometimes to examine my countenance with a look that made my heart sink within me.

“ When the most dismal meal I had ever made was over, he told me we must renew our journey. I obeyed in silence, and we travelled the rest of the night, stopping twice to change horses.

“ When morning broke, I found we were in a mountainous country : between the high points of land, among which our road lay, I caught glimpses of the sea, and a faint and vague hope presented itself that I might be destined to some port remote from Naples to be sent to England. For none of the various conjectures, which, during this melancholy journey, passed through my mind, were so probable, as that the mother of Montalbert, enraged at what she had heard, and determined, at all events, to divide me from her son, had taken this method to conceal me from him while he was, perhaps, persuaded that I had perished in Sicily. With this hope, therefore, I looked out anxiously for the element, which, I hoped, might restore me to my country,

where

where I was sure the vigilant love of Montalbert would soon follow me.

Ah! vain and flattering illusion!—I indulged it only to embitter the miserable moments which have since passed; and, as they passed, have told me that, though Montalbert lives, I shall see him no more.

“ I must lay down my pen, and try to conquer the tears which half efface the words I have written, and which will make my letter illegible.

“ I have taken a few turns in the gallery—my little Harry in my arms. Oh! would he could answer when I talk to him of his dear father—he smiles innocently as if he already understood me!—If he should be ill in this desolate place—what would become of me!—The idea freezes my heart; but, alas! why should I torment myself with possible miseries, when I have so many real ones. Heaven sure will spare me from a trial to which I feel my strength altogether unequal. I know that I ought to check these gloomy
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thoughts,

thoughts, and to preserve my own health, if I would avoid the distresses they represent to me.

“ But this is, indeed, difficult, Montalbert!—The poor solitary Rosalie has no human being to listen to her complaints, or to strengthen her resolution. Day after day she wanders round the deserted apartments of this melancholy house; she sees the faces of two servants, mean, ignorant, and without pity, who perform, in silence, the common offices of life, but seem totally insensible of the state of mind of their wretched prisoner: even the beauty of my lovely child does not plead with these people for him, or for me!

“ But I shall exhaust myself in lamenting my present situation, and become unable to pursue my narrative.

“ I go back then to relate the sequel of my melancholy journey, which continued all that day and the next, with only short intervals of rest; one of these was at a lone inn, on the steep ascent of a mountain, where my conductors put up,
rather,

rather, I believe, to avoid the violence of a storm that was likely to overtake them on the top of it, than to afford me and my child the repose we greatly needed.

“ Imagine, Montalbert, your unhappy wife sitting in one of the most dismal places imagination can conceive; the walls were of brick, and concealed only by the dirt that in most places covered them; there were neither sashes nor shutters to the windows, through which the lightning flashed, and the rain drove with fearful violence: but I had lately beheld convulsions of nature so much more dreadful, that I saw this tempest without any additional terror. Had I been sure that such a destiny awaited me as I have since experienced, I should, perhaps, have been more than indifferent, and have implored some friendly stroke which might have ended mine and my child’s life. . . . Alas! for what are we reserved?

“ I looked at the group, which was assembled in the same room, with alarm
infinitely

infinitely greater than what I felt from the tempest without, violent as it was. I have seen paintings, Montalbert, representing such people ; but in England we have no such faces, at least I never saw such !

“ The men, however, seemed so well pleased with their quarters, that they were in no haste to depart, and I was afraid we should have passed the night in that hideous place : I could not imagine any thing that might await me at the end of my journey, more dreary, forlorn, and dangerous, for the people of the house seemed to be such as I remember reading a description of in one of Smollet’s novels. Willingly, therefore, I obeyed the signal which my companion in the coach, at length, gave for us to proceed forward.

“ The remaining part of our journey lasted until, at a late hour in the night, I was removed into one of the carriages of the country, and we again travelled in darkness, very slowly, through roads where a common coach or chaise could not pass, and which would have given me at
another

another time great fears ; but I was now so worn down with fatigue, and so bewildered in distracting conjectures of what was to come, that the present evil was less felt ; nor should I, I think, have shrunk from death, could I have been assured that my infant would not survive me.

“ At length, however, as nearly as I could conjecture, about three in the morning of the third night, we arrived at the place, where the man who was in the carriage told me, I was to remain.

“ I was so enfeebled and dispirited, so cramped with a long and fatiguing journey, and so worn down with anguish of mind, that I was unable to assist myself in getting out of the coach. The men, however, took me with as much ease as they did my little boy, and a coarse-looking man, who came out of the house, carried a light before us up a long and steep flight of steps. They led to a large hall, paved and lined with marble : it was
so

so large, and so cold, that I fancied myself already in the catacombs; but, alas! I could not weep—I felt the blood forsaking my heart, which seemed to beat no longer. I sat down, however, as the people bade me, till the baggage was brought out of the coach.

“ The few ideas, which fatigue and terror left me, pointed to imprisonment as what was certainly to be my lot, and I expected to be led to some dungeon beneath this immense apartment, and left to perish. After some moments, my conductor approached me: he told me, that here his commission ended; that he had orders to leave me in this house, where the necessities of life would be provided for me, and from whence he need scarce advise me not to attempt to escape, for escape was impossible, as I was far removed from all who had any knowledge of me, and the whole country was devoted to his employer.

‘ And who is your employer, Sir? (said I); tell me, at least, that—that I may
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know by what right, or on what account, I am become a prisoner.’

‘ You may think yourself fortunate, (returned the man), that you are in the hands of those who do not use all the power they possess; your treatment will in some measure depend on yourself. The people here can do nothing to assist your flight, even if you should be weak enough to tempt them; but I advise you to content yourself with the assurance that every effort will be ineffectual; and, that if you give much trouble to the persons in whose care you remain, your confinement will be made more strict and severe.’

“ To this I had nothing to reply, nor did the man stay to hear any farther remonstrance, but hastily left this gloomy apartment, and as dead a silence reigned as if I had been already buried alive.

“ The immense hall, or rather cave of marble, was lighted only by a lamp that stood on a distant table, and it seemed to me to have been built for gigantic beings,

beings, so great were its dimensions and so heavy its construction.—‘ And is it here (said I to myself, as I surveyed the place) that I am left to die, unaided and unknown?—Or am I consigned to the mercy of the inhabitants of this place?’—Fatigue and fear, overcoming and depressing my mind, brought before it strange phantoms more horrible than any reality could be; and such an effect had this comfortless solitude on my exhausted spirits, that I thought my situation on the night of the dreadful concussion of the earth, when I took shelter in the farm of Alozzi, was infinitely less dreadful. So much heavier do present evils appear than those that are past.

“ I believe I had been more than half an hour alone, and began to think I might lie down unmolested on the pavement and die, when the door at the farther end of the hall opened slowly, and a figure, which I could hardly distinguish through the gloom, moved slowly towards me. When
it

it came near, I discerned that it was a woman in a kind of nun's dress; she spoke in a low and slow voice. There was something in her language which I did not understand; but she seemed to invite me to remove from the place where I was. I arose, therefore, and followed her; she took up the lamp that was burning on the marble table, and proceeded through long and high passages, which appeared to terminate in utter darkness.

“ At length we came to a very broad staircase, which my guide began to ascend, though very slowly, and like a person who was either unwilling or unable to arrive very soon at the place whither they were going. I looked up and round this great staircase. Never could a place be imagined more massive, or more impressing, fit to convey the idea of a habitation of goblins and spectres; almost every part was of dark marble, and, in places where ornament was admitted, old paintings, blackened and nearly effaced by time, and
some

some faded gilding, served but to mark the long desertion of its owners.

“ The top of the stairs led into a gallery, which, through a marble balustrade, looked down into the great hall I had left, where I saw, by a light they had with them, three or four of the men that had accompanied me, who appeared like assassins assembled to decide on the fate of their victim. Yet such were the terrors that had seized me, from the uncertainty and singularity of my situation, that I had more dread of supernatural beings, I knew not what, than of these men who had so lately been the objects of my apprehension.

“ This surrounding gallery opened into another very large room, covered with some kind of mosaic painting, and that into another as big, but not in so good repair; at the bottom of which was a table with a crucifix upon it. The third door, that my silent conductress opened, discovered a bedchamber of nearly the
same

same dimensions as the other two ; where a small low bed, that stood in one corner, was hardly discernable. All seemed cold and comfortless, and the air was damp and heavy, as if the room had been long without ventilation. My conductress led me up to the bed—‘ This (said she) is your room, Signora Inglese, and this your bed.’

“ I hastily asked, but in a manner the most conciliating that I could command, whether I might be allowed a light, a fire, and food?—and proceeded to say, how greatly I and my poor little boy were fatigued with a very long journey of so many days and nights. The woman, whose face I now for the first time saw, looked at me and the innocent helpless creature for which I was pleading. Her countenance, which was fallow and sharp-featured, expressed rather distaste than pity or tenderness ; she spoke low, and, as I understood, declined complying with my request ; however, she lit an iron lamp that was fastened to the wall, and,
without

without any more ceremony left me as I believed for the night.

“ I heard her footsteps fainter and fainter, as she passed through the rooms we had before traversed; the doors shut after her, and again a death-like silence reigned. My child was restless, and I wished to undress him; but the comfort of a fire was denied me, and I surveyed my bed as if it had been my tomb, hardly daring to lie down upon it, yet feeling that I had no longer strength to sit up. I determined, therefore, to wrap myself and my boy in the cloke we had around us, and since I had no change of clothes for him, for my trunks remained in the hall, to attempt hushing him to repose on my breast—a breast torn, alas! with such variety of anguish, that now, though a fortnight has since elapsed, I look back upon those hours with a sensation of astonishment, and, recollecting the severity of my sufferings, am grateful for the power that was lent me to sustain them.

“ But

“ But I break off here, Montalbert, and must recal more perfectly the succeeding hours, before I can finish this narrative, which I intend as a sort of prelude to the melancholy register of my time which I have kept.

“ I am supported, Montalbert, by the hope which in my calmer moments never entirely forsakes me, that we shall one day read this journal together, and that, while you suffer for the sorrows of your Rosalie, you will clasp her fondly to your heart, and rejoice that they are no more.

“ If that moment ever comes, Montalbert, for what calamities will it not overpay us! ”

CHAP. XXIV.

THE next letter from Rosalie to Montalbert thus described her subsequent situation.

“ My jailers were, however, less severe than I had expected. With a feeble step, and a heart overwhelmed with anguish, I was exploring, as well as I could, the room I was in, to see if it afforded me such security for the night as depended on bolts or locks: I opened a door on the farther side of it, which led into long and high passages, and from whence the wind rushed with a violence which obliged me to shut it hastily. I was endeavouring to fasten it withinside, by pushing the bolt that was too rusty for my strength to move, when I heard heavy steps

steps as of several persons approaching through the great rooms adjoining. Alarmed, I returned nearer to the light; and, breathless and trembling, I waited for the entrance of these people. My fears, however, somewhat subsided, when I saw a man, who appeared to be a peasant, approach with wood, and another with the boxes that contained mine and my child's clothes, while the woman, whom I had seen before, stood at the door; one of the men made a fire, the other went away, and in a few moments returned with some provisions and wine. Every thing passed in profound silence, except when it was broken by my attempting to express to the woman, in whom all authority seemed to be vested, my gratitude for these indulgences, and entreated her to allow that the door, to which I pointed across the room, might be fastened within-side. She ordered one of the men to do it, and having placed the supper before me, and left a small bundle of wood to feed the fire, they all departed, and I

prepared to recruit my strength and refresh my poor baby by changing his clothes. He was soon in a sweet sleep, and now, for the first time for many hours, this melioration of my condition afforded me the relief of shedding tears. My destiny still appeared dreadful, but as there seemed to be no design to destroy my life, I trusted that whoever had taken so much trouble to remove me would at length relent, and that I should be one day restored to you, Montalbert.

“ Determining then to arm myself with patience, and to resign myself wholly to that Providence which had hitherto protected me, I laid down on my little bed, after securing as well as I could the other door of the chamber; but, still prepossessed with an idea of its dampness, I dared not undress myself; fatigue, however, overcame all apprehensions, and I slept several hours, till the calls of my nursing awakened me to a sense of his sorrows and my own.

“ I re-

“ I recollected instantly all that had happened to me, and turned my eyes towards the immense windows of my room, between the thick wooden shutters of which day appeared. I arose, and with some difficulty opened one of them, and beheld from it a diversified landscape of great extent, terminated on one side by the sea at the distance of hardly a mile ; a river, which ran from the country on the left of the castle, fell into the ocean just beneath, where a few mean houses, intermingled with some ruined buildings, gave me the idea of an ancient port ; between the place where I was and the sea the ground was marshy and cheerless, but on each side the land formed a mountainous curve, covered with woods, of which another window gave me a more distinct view. I opened the casement by the utmost exertion of my strength ; and refreshed by the morning air and the cheering light of the sun, I took courage to examine the place, where it seemed but too probable I was destined long to remain.

“ I found that I was in an immense fortress, or castle, situated on an eminence, and covering for a considerable space its unequal summit. Great square towers, more ancient than the rest, projected over the declivity; but the spaces between these had more the appearance of old Italian houses, such as I had been used to see. On the side next the sea there was a deep fossé, beyond which the hill fell perpendicularly into a sort of marsh; but on the other side, on which the window I had opened looked, it appeared as if that part of it, immediately near the house, had once been cultivated as a garden or plantation, for amidst inequalities, which seemed to have been made by human art for the purposes of defence, were a few groups of very old cypresses, and square enclosures bordered with evergreens, now wild and run into disorder. Among them I observed two or three colossal statues and pillars of marble, all of which seemed to have suffered from violence, for I could perceive
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that they were broken and mutilated: beyond this ground, which I ought, perhaps, to call a garden, the country rose into very high mountains on each side of the river, leaving on its banks a valley of about half a mile in extent, were a few straggling cottages surrounded with olive grounds, such as I remember in Sicily, and there were some plantations of oranges about the houses, with vineyards on the hills where the wood was cleared away. Higher mountains closed the land prospect, and the course of the river was lost among them.

“ Such appeared, on my first survey of it, the place where I was, perhaps, to pass my life; but, I saw the bright sun above me, I beheld variety of objects illuminated by his beams, I felt the balmy breath of Heaven on my face, which seemed to restore the enfeebled powers of life. My boy smiled on me, and appeared uninjured in his health by the fatigues he had gone through, and hope and peace in some measure returned.

“ In examining, however, and reflecting on my situation, I began to be convinced, that what the man, who conducted me, had told me was true ; that I was placed where there was no possible means of escape—I knew not in what part of Italy I was ; the people I had seen, spoke, I thought, a language unlike the Italian I had learned, and I guessed from the manner of the woman, when I addressed myself to her, that she understood me with difficulty. I was entirely in the power of the person, whoever it was, to whom this castle or feudal residence belonged, and probably the whole country round was inhabited by vassals and dependents who dared not assist me, even if I had possessed the means of speaking to or bribing them.

“ It was impossible to assign any other cause for what had happened to me, than the rage and indignation of Signora Belcastro ; and I now endeavoured to recollect, what I had heard you, my Montalbert, relate of your mother’s property and
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power in a part of Italy at a considerable distance from Naples, and of a suit at law she had gained against your elder brother, which had confirmed her in the considerable estates he had disputed with her.—Careless as to what related to property, which I considered only as a barrier to our happiness, I had given less attention to this detail than to almost any thing else, relative to your mother, on which we had ever conversed; but now endeavouring to recal that conversation to my mind, I thought it certain that I was her prisoner in one of those baronial houses that belonged to her; and as she might have condemned me, defenceless as I was, to a convent, or even to a dungeon, I felt something like gratitude towards her, for not having treated me so cruelly as she might have done.

“ The very circumstance of her confining me at all counteracted part of the uneasiness it inflicted; for I reflected, that had not my Montalbert lived, and

still remained attached to his Rosalie, it could never have been an object to his mother to banish me thus from every place where he was likely to inquire for me. It would have been easier for her, and more inimical to the pretensions which offended her, to have sent me and my son to England, where, in the obscurity of poverty, perhaps of disgrace, (for you will observe that in my letter I have related the manner of our marriage), I should have been too much depressed ever to have troubled her more either with my child's claims or my own. But in England Montalbert might have sought me, and I was persuaded that it was her fear of that, which had shut me up in a fortress on a distant part of the Italian shore.

“ There was, however, something soothing to my imagination in the sight of the sea, the only medium by which I could reach my native land, for thither my wishes were directed; thither I believed Montalbert was gone in search of his Rosalie;

false; and there, in my present disposition to sanguine hope, I flattered myself with believing we should meet again.

“ The woman I had seen the evening before came into my room, and brought me dried fruit and biscuits for my breakfast; but she seemed to keep her resolution of being inexorably silent, and when I asked her to inform me what liberty would be granted me, she answered drily, that I might walk about the house. I then ventured to inquire where I was?—in what part of the country?

“ The woman, fixing on me a look where pity seemed stifled by contempt and prejudice, answered, that I was in Calabria, and that, if my confinement had the happy effect of leading me from the heretical and bad opinions I had been brought up in, I ought to thank the blessed Saints who had permitted my escape from perdition. I cannot do justice to the strength of her language, for it was a dialect quite unlike common Italian; but the countenance and manner of the

woman it would be still more difficult to paint. I received her admonition with an appearance of submission, and asked her if she belonged to a religious society?—She replied, that she was not a nun. This gave me no satisfaction; I wished to ask, to whom she belonged, if she was a domestic of the house?—and this question I endeavoured to make in the way least likely to alarm her integrity; but my art was all thrown away; neither then nor at any other time could I prevail on her to tell me whom she served, or by what prospect of advantage she was engaged to live a life more solitary than that of a convent. She was, in appearance and manners, a little, and but a little, superior to the peasantry of the domain whom I have since had occasion to see.

“I now took my little Harry in my arms, and began to survey my great and melancholy dwelling. I wandered from room to room—they appeared less gloomy, yet larger, than when I had seen them before;

fore ; that next to mine seemed to have been used as an oratory, but, except a marble table, serving for an altar, and several seats covered with flowered velvet, of great antiquity, it was as destitute of furniture as the rest. Some, indeed, were quite empty, and others even without windows, in place of which pieces of board were nailed up, which rendered the apartments entirely dark. There seemed no end of these great gloomy rooms ; the survey of them was little calculated to encourage that cheerful train of thought which I had indulged in the morning. As I looked over the balustrades into the great hall, or cast my eyes along the extensive range of rooms and galleries, not even the brilliant light of an Italian sky could drive from my mind the idea of their being visited by nocturnal spectres.

“ The remembrance of what my conductor had told me, that I could never escape, struck cold upon my heart. The lone and isolated situation of this mournful

ful

ful solitude seemed to confirm it but too strongly. I listened at a window to the sounds around the house, by which I thought I could judge whether there were many inhabitants; but I heard only the notes of birds, who were now in the season of song. No human voice was heard—no noise of mechanics, or labourers, about the offices; and towards evening, as the variety of birds without ceased their chorus, a silence so solemn pervaded the place, that I felt my terror return, as if my child and I were the only living creatures in this vast edifice.

“ My silent keeper, however, regularly returned with food; and as I thought, on the second day, that she regarded me with less asperity, I again attempted to enter into conversation with her.

“ I began by expressing my concern for the trouble I gave her, and asked, if she alone executed all the business of this large house?—She replied, that she had help when she wanted it.

‘ Alas!

‘ Alas! (then said I), how much happier you are than I am!—I should be content, methinks, if I had one female companion to speak to. . . . Indeed I should be very much obliged to you, if you would now and then sit with me—it is extremely dreary never to hear the sound of a human voice.’

‘ Ahime, Signora! (replied the woman, who was called Cattina)—Ahime! you complain of want of company already!—and I, Signora, pray to the blessed Lady that we may not see at the castle any other persons than are here now, at least while I am its inhabitant; but perhaps, Signora, you might not hold in abhorrence such visitors as have been here in former times, and not so long ago, that is, not so very long ago neither.’

“ I asked what visitors she could mean in a place like this, which seemed to me to be the very extremity of Europe.

‘ Yes, (replied she), it is a long long way off, to be sure, from any great town; but the visitors I mean are not Christians,

as

as we are, of this country, but Pagans and Heretics like the wicked English. This castle has been plundered by the Algerines three or four times, and that is the reason that my ----- (she suddenly recollected herself, paused, and then went on)—that the owners of it never have resided here for I don't know how many years; and nothing is now ever left in the house of any value.'

"My very soul failed within me as I heard this.—'O merciful Heaven! (exclaimed I), and these Algerines yet come occasionally to this coast!—and you think it not impossible but that they may return hither?—Tell me, Madam, I entreat you, how long it is since they were here?'

'Three or four years, perhaps, (answered Cattina, resuming her usual cold manner). I don't know, however, exactly as to that; perhaps they may not land on the coast again, or not just here, for they know there is nothing of value for them to take: but then, indeed, we have

have no defence; formerly there was a guard kept at the castle, and those guns that you see there below were kept loaded to drive away the infidels, but all that is laid aside now. For my part I am not much afraid.’

“ I now doubted whether Cattina had not told me this, to add to my punishment by all the aggravation of imaginary terrors. I had hardly courage to inquire farther; yet I ventured to make her some farther questions, and she took me to a window on the southern side of the house, where she shewed me evident marks of the depredations made by the Barbarians, who had, she said, about five and twenty years before landed to the number of fifty, and killed all the men who were then in the house, carrying off the women and children, not only from the castle, but the villages around it.—‘ And who (said I), then resided in the castle?—Were the owners themselves among those who suffered?’

“ Cattina looked as if she would say—
 ‘ And do you really think yourself cunning
 enough

enough to engage me, by these questions, to betray my trust ?'—She then, affecting not perfectly to understand my question, for we had already been once or twice puzzled in our dialogue, left me to brood alone over the additional dread she had impressed upon me. I went to the window and looked upon the sea, which I had formerly gazed at with so much pleasure : now, as the last rays of the setting sun illuminated its waves with glowing light, I fancied that they might guide some inhuman pirates towards these lonely and defenceless walls, and that the vengeance of your mother, your cruel mother, had looked forward with malignant satisfaction to such a catastrophe, and had devoted me and my child to slavery—a fate infinitely worse than death.

“ O Montalbert ! what a night I passed after this discovery !—I forgot my real terrors only to be assaulted by all that fancy could collect : yet, I heard you, I saw you in my dreams, but it was contending with these lawless plunderers of
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the sea, for the safety of your wife and your boy. I saw you struggling with numbers ; I shrieked, awoke, and listened in breathless terror to hear if this fearful vision was not realised, though you, Montalbert, I knew were not there. All, however, was still around me, and I heard only the soft breathing of my child as he lay sleeping on my arm, while my tears fell on his cheek. Thus passed the first eight and forty hours of my abode here."

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.



